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ABSTRACT

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) conducted a study of educational needs in its member states: Alaska Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The 1992 Regional Needs Assessment had three objectives: (1) to identify current and emerging issues affecting educators in the Northwest; (2) to identify research and development needs related to these issues; and (3) to assess implications of these issues and needs for NWREL program and policy development. Research and surveys determined the following issues of concern: systemic change, school finance, curriculum and instruction, meeting all students' needs, defining and assessing outcomes, engaging the community, teacher support and respect, and technology. Research and development needs as well as dissemination of information and service are also concerns of Northwest educators. The implications of these changes and needs for NWREL are many. NWREL must expand its support of systemic change, further strategies for service integration and collaboration, and increase curriculum and instructional assistance. Also, the NWREL must increase support for student assessment, help schools meet all student needs, increase family and community involvement, and coordinate school finance and resource issues. Five appendices include survey instruments and survey data tables for the region and by respondent group. (JPT)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

ED 366 072

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE NORTHWEST:

1992 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by

Laura Walkush
Rex W. Hagans

Planning and Service Coordination
Rex Hagans, Director

for

Board of Directors
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

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May 1993

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) is vitally concerned with the needs of its regional constituents. To assure that its program policy and development efforts stay tightly connected to the dynamic nature of efforts to improve education in the Northwest, NWREL annually conducts an assessment of educational needs of the five-state region it serves (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington).

NWREL designs its approach to assure both continuity in tracking needs over time and identification of important new needs as they emerge. An established cycle of needs sensing activities uses multiple data sources to collect information from an array of regional constituents.

The 1992 Regional Needs Assessment had three objectives: (1) to identify current and emerging issues affecting educators in the Northwest; (2) to identify R&D assistance needs related to current and emerging issues; and (3) to assess implications of the current and emerging issues and R&D assistance needs for NWREL program and policy development. The major findings follow.

Highlights of the 1992 Regional Needs Assessment

Several data sources, including surveys of local educators and school boards, indicated the following issues are of increasing concern across the region:

School improvement continues to challenge regional educators, with the focus shifting toward the future and systemic change. School improvement efforts have been the top concern of regional educators for the past several years, and again this year is the area in which the most educators report as affecting their work. However, there is a discernible shift in the nature of the efforts they are undertaking; change approaches are more systemic and comprehensive. More than 40 percent of all three key groups (teachers, principals, and superintendents) say that reorganizing and restructuring schools is a major concern, while school board reports indicate that an increasing number of districts are engaged in strategic planning. The implementation of state school reform initiatives also is high on the agenda of a large and growing number. Interest in implementing site-based decision making and evaluating the effectiveness of reform efforts and programs is increasing in the region.

School finance is a growing concern. Concern about finance is a perennial favorite when educators are asked about educational needs, but this year's survey reveals a deepening sense of urgency. More than 80 percent of all groups report that it is affecting their work and well over 50 percent say that its effect is a major factor in their daily lives. Facilities increasingly are needed to alleviate overcrowding, while the stable, long-term revenue sources so essential to implementing reform and assuring program quality are seen as slipping away.

Curriculum and instruction are commanding increased attention. A multi-year trend toward more attention to what is taught and how it is delivered appears to be gaining momentum among Northwest educators. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of the curriculum is affecting the work of over 80 percent and nearly half say the effect on

their day-to-day efforts is a major one. Integration of traditional subjects, attention to critical thinking and cooperative learning approaches, and improving alignment between curriculum and assessment are high among the structural issues which are seen as needing attention, while science, mathematics, and writing top the list of content areas in which improvement is viewed as essential. Nongraded primaries, multiage classrooms, and developmentally appropriate practices are being implemented by growing numbers.

A particularly important area emerging strongly this year is preparing students for work in the 21st century. Efforts to integrate work and learning are on the increase as are attempts to restructure the curriculum so that problem solving and application of academic skills supersede traditional approaches in both academic and vocational programs.

Meeting the needs of all students remains a formidable task. Improving student achievement is of great and continuing concern to regional educators, but it is not alone on their list of priorities for children and youth. Improving student behavior and motivation, fostering respect for differences as well as for one another, helping students achieve higher levels of self-esteem, and increasing school-family interaction are all felt to be increasingly critical outcomes for a system which aspires to produce resilient and effective young adults. Responsiveness to students with special needs and disabilities is also of growing concern in the region. In general, assistance needs have shifted from learning more about the needs of children and youth toward identifying effective strategies for meeting those needs and improving outcomes.

Defining and assessing outcomes is central. In that most see these as times of wrenching change, the importance of defining and measuring what we are about continues to grow in importance for Northwest educators. The concern for identifying a broad set of widely valued outcomes is increasing and merges with the need for alternative approaches to the assessment task. More than 80 percent of local educators indicated that developing performance assessment methods is affecting their work, and at least 40 percent said the effect is major. The integration of curriculum and assessment is an arena in which many are currently engaged, while the concern for appropriate and effective use of standardized measures is at an all-time high.

The full community must be engaged. The expressed need to focus all the resources of the community on the development of young people is growing among all groups. Policy makers and teachers alike say that increased and improved integration of education and human resource efforts must be achieved, while increasing family and community involvement in defining and achieving important outcomes is an issue which is of concern to over 80 percent of all educators and is already having a major effect on the daily efforts of nearly half. Improving relations and communication with the broader community is a priority for many.

Teachers require support and respect. The demands placed on teachers by such factors as the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, the importance of greater engagement with parents and community, use of performance assessment techniques, and the implementation of restructuring and reform initiatives are creating a whole new set of roles and responsibilities. They require attention to opportunities for professional growth, as well as flexibility and time to perform new functions. Northwest educators see opportunities for collaboration and broader understanding and respect for the professionalism required as particularly important needs if real improvement is to be achieved. Emerging as central to these concerns is the relationship among the family, the community, and the school. Northwest educators increasingly recognize the importance of the family as both first teacher and primary advocate, as well as the increasing diversity in the nature of families. The role of community in supporting

families, as well as schools, also is emerging as critical and an area in which the school must play an important role.

Technology is an emerging force. Northwest educators increasingly see technology as a critical element in achieving their goals for children and youth. Integration of technology into the curriculum in such critical areas as science, math, writing, and applied academics is of great concern, and distance learning is seen as essential for providing access to the rural and isolated schools. Telecommunications provide growing opportunities for rapid access to databases and learning technologies worldwide. The need for planning, funding, and staying current is on the minds of a large and growing number of professionals and policy makers.

R&D Assistance is Increasingly Important

The educators of the Northwest increasingly seek research and development assistance in meeting their educational challenges. Teachers, administrators, and policy makers, alike, articulate the importance of a continuum of research, development, dissemination, and service.

Research. Research activities which generate knowledge and data are being sought in emerging areas such as the implementation of nongraded primaries and multiage classrooms; further development of assessment alternatives which are performance-based and authentic; inclusion of special needs students in the classroom; school restructuring and reorganization options; use and effectiveness of technology; and systemic approaches to change.

Development. Need for development assistance (synthesizing and applying knowledge and data) was evident with respect to many current and emerging issues. Knowledge and data about effective strategies and promising practices are being sought by local educators, especially practitioners involved in school improvement and systemic change efforts and concerned about meeting the needs of all students and improving student achievement, motivation, and behavior. Effective teaching styles and curriculum options are needed to respond effectively to students needs and to improve students' multicultural sensitivity, respect for others, and self-esteem. Appropriate assessment methods are needed to measure student performance and other student outcomes. Schools and districts are also looking for strategies to strengthen family and community involvement, support, and collaboration and to support efforts to integrate education and human services. Early childhood education programs, developmentally-appropriate practices, curriculum integration, vocational education, outcome-based education, use of technology, and improved resource coordination are other areas needing further development in the region.

Dissemination. Dissemination of information, particularly effective strategies and promising practices, is needed with respect to all of the areas mentioned above. Practitioners frequently request research information to assist them in considering alternatives or to assist them in planning and implementing school improvement processes, instructional strategies, and collaboration and integration efforts. Assistance with networking, referral, and convening was cited in relation to collaboration building and integration of education and human services; broadening support for state reform; and strengthening local community understanding and support of school improvement efforts and site-based decision making.

Service. Technical assistance and consultation is needed in a wide range of areas, including strategic planning, systemic reform, curriculum integration, restructuring and

integrating vocational education, student assessment, collaboration and integration efforts; site-based decision making and management; communications improvement; and early childhood education. Many districts, faced with cut backs and funding limitations, are also seeking assistance with coordinating resources efficiently and effectively, identifying alternative funding sources, and cutting costs without compromising quality.

Staff training needs are evident across all need areas, but especially with respect to curriculum integration; student assessment; instructional strategies for improving student achievement, behavior, motivation, and self-esteem; developmentally appropriate practice; administrative leadership and supervision; staff collaboration and team building; and strengthening family and community support and involvement.

Practitioners are seeking planning assistance with school improvement and reform efforts, use of technology and technology integration, and staff development. Assistance with program evaluation and evaluation of school improvement and reform efforts was expressed as a need by several principals and superintendents.

Implications for NWREL

This regional needs assessment provides a broad-based picture of current and emerging needs in the region. Needs data indicate that NWREL's current set of Strategic Goals within program policy appropriately reflects the major needs expressed in the region. However, shifts within these broad areas indicate important directions for expansion of current services and development of new service capabilities. These include:

- Continuation and expansion of services in support of school improvement efforts, with an emphasis on achieving systemic change and strengthening links to a broad range of outcomes
- Continuation and expansion of NWREL's capability to support and identify successful strategies for service integration and collaboration efforts
- Increased capability to assist with curriculum and instruction issues, including integration across subjects; improvement of math, science and reading instruction; development of effective vocational education, technical training, and applied academics programs; implementation of nongraded primaries and multiage classrooms; and use of developmentally appropriate practice
- Continuation and expansion of R&D efforts to support strengthened student assessment, including development of assessment alternatives and staff training
- Increased assistance with the development of strategies for addressing the full range of student needs and for enhancing student behavior, motivation, and respect for diversity
- Increased attention to the development of strategies for increasing family and community involvement, support, and collaboration
- Increased capability to assist with the development of community-initiated improvement efforts
- Expanded capability to assist with school finance and resource coordination issues

II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Regional educational laboratories play an active role in assisting schools and other organizations in supporting the development of children, youth, and adults. This role has been defined in the mission statement of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL):

> NWREL provides leadership, expertise, and services of the highest quality, based on research and development, for systemic changes which result in improvement of educational outcomes for children, youth, and adults in schools and communities throughout the region.
>
> - Leadership is provided to community agencies, schools, and other institutions concerned with education.
> - Expertise--capabilities, knowledge, and skills--is maintained to assist communities to meet a broad spectrum of educational and related needs.
> - High quality technical, analytical, facilitating, and training services are provided.
> - Processes and results of research and development are utilized to strengthen and improve educational outcomes.
> - Improvement of existing systems and development of new systems draws on its extensive knowledge and expert resources.
> - A broad range of educational outcomes includes not only academic achievement, but also effective functioning as individuals, citizens, and workers.
> - Services are provided to schools and communities to better meet the educational needs of people of all ages.
> - Services are provided to schools, state and local education agencies, postsecondary education, human resource agencies, other government and public agencies, labor, businesses, and other groups in the Northwest region.

A. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AS AN INSTITUTIONAL FUNCTION

To be responsive as well as proactive in providing research and development assistance to schools and other organizations in the region, NWREL annually assesses educational needs in the Northwest region (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington) and applies needs information to policy that guides program development and the selection and development of R&D activities.

An established cycle of activities based on NWREL's fiscal year (September 1 through August 31) assures that needs information is applied to planning routinely throughout the institution. These activities include:

- Review of the needs assessment design by the NWREL Board of Directors Program Policy Committee and by the Program Planning Council, which is made up of NWREL's program directors
- Review of findings by the Board Program Policy Committee, with identification of implications and recommendations for program policy revision
- Policy action by the Board of Directors
- Review of findings and revised program policy by the Program Planning Council, with identification of appropriate programmatic actions
- Reference to the regional needs assessment findings in ongoing planning, development, and evaluation activities throughout the year

This annual cycle is maintained from year to year. However, in any given year, the specific focus and scope of the needs assessment may vary. The Board Program Policy Committee reflects on NWREL's information needs and the needs assessment design is developed in accordance. NWREL views its needs assessment activities longitudinally, basing each year's design on the information gathered the prior year, so that the work is conducted in a manner that is cost-effective and does not impinge too heavily on the region's educational practitioners and educational assistance partners. This iterative process enables trends in needs to be traced over several years' time.

B. FOCUS AREAS FOR THE 1992 REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The 1992 Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) has three objectives:

1. Develop both an immediate and longer term sense of regional needs by identifying current and emerging issues.
2. Identify R&D assistance needs related to current and emerging issues.
3. Assess implications of the current issues, major emerging issues, and R&D assistance needs for NWREL policy and program development.

These purposes are explained in more detail in the following sections.

Current and Emerging Issues

A large-scale effort to identify both current and emerging issues occurs twice during NWREL's five-year cycle for needs gathering and policy development. In the current cycle, such an effort was carried out this year, in 1992, and will be carried out again in 1994. The 1992 RNA is designed to provide a broad base of needs information about current and emerging issues from a variety of data sources, including major surveys of teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards throughout the region. Refinement and validation of the issues and further needs identification activities will be conducted in 1993 in preparation for the next large-scale effort in 1994. This cycle

enables NWREL to gather information about educators' most pressing and immediate concerns, as well as about longer term, emerging issues which may constitute trends that will increasingly impact educators in the Northwest.

R&D Assistance Needs

Another purpose of the 1992 RNA is to assess R&D assistance needs related to the current and emerging issues which are identified. Several of the data sources solicit information about the types of assistance educators need in addressing their immediate and growing concerns. Such insight enables NWREL to respond now with appropriate R&D strategies and to anticipate future needs for research, development, dissemination, and service.

Policy and Program Development

The third purpose of 1992 RNA activities is to consider ways in which program policy and program development are responsive to the major areas of need identified this year.

Upon review of prior needs assessment findings and NWREL's strategic planning process, NWREL's Board of Directors' Program Policy Committee proposed that NWREL's guiding Areas of Programmatic Emphasis become Strategic Goals. These Goals guide NWREL's work in the areas of greatest and growing concern to regional educators and are stated to express NWREL's intent to improve regional outcomes within each area. The seven Strategic Goals guiding NWREL program planning, development, implementation, and evaluation are stated below.

Goal 1 **NWREL will strengthen its role as a proactive leader in improving the outcomes of schooling.**

Outcomes are increasingly seen as the primary focus of concern for schools. Not only are schools assessed on the basis of outcomes they produce for students, but the power of an outcome focus for planning and structuring education is becoming more and more clear. When teachers, administrators, and communities set forth their vision for children in terms of academic achievement, social behavior, aspirations, and employability, and plan specifically for achieving them, other questions are often answered. Teachers become empowered as leaders and participants in the improvement process, and schools are restructured to best achieve the desired results.

Two decades of educational research have provided a solid base for the improvements needed, and growing numbers of schools and districts are interested in implementing improvement efforts. However, the specific focus and appropriate activities will need to change as our vision of the future and our expectations for our children increase. For example, NWREL must extend its efforts to ensure that at-risk students are better served by improvement efforts that assist schools and communities to identify outcomes which reduce risk and to monitor them closely. In this and other ways, NWREL intends to anticipate direction and strengthen its role as a proactive leader in improving the outcomes of schooling.

Goal 2 **NWREL will provide leadership and research and development support for regional efforts to strengthen the education profession.**

The professionalization of teaching and management in the schools has made great strides. The recognition that development of people is central to an organization's long-term vitality, effectiveness, and even survival has become more generally accepted. Increasingly, the growing knowledge bases of practices are being translated into effective programs which place local building personnel more squarely in charge of the instructional decision making process. This is promoting change in professional roles, methods of staff development, and attitudes toward the profession. Challenges remain. One of particular priority is the linkage of professional development efforts with improved outcomes for students. Second, the provision of support and assistance to buildings and classrooms as they meet the challenge of increasing numbers of young people at risk is a high priority need. Other priority substantive topics for the region include increased access to improved procedures for classroom assessment, greater focus on teacher evaluation as a growth-oriented process, and increased access to information and resources for school improvement for professionals in small, rural, and isolated schools.

NWREL will take an active role in partnerships with professional associations, institutions of higher education, schools and state departments of education in designing and implementing research and development efforts to address these challenges.

Goal 3 **The full range of NWREL's programs will reflect understanding of, and responsiveness to, issues of equity.**

Many groups in our society, especially the poor, women, and cultural and ethnic minorities, continue to experience great social disadvantage and inequities in education and employment. Recent demographic studies clearly indicate an increase in the numbers of individuals and families who are not being afforded the necessary support they need in order to attain their full potential as members of society. This condition is resulting in a growing disconnection from society.

In education, this situation is exacerbated by factors such as renewed segregation, teachers' limited expectations for poor and minority children, cultural bias in instructional materials, and the persistence of gender stereotyping. NWREL has both the knowledge base and the broad working relationships to assist with ensuring the sensitivity and equal access to education, employment, and social living opportunities which can result in a truly equitable treatment of our students. The full range of NWREL's programs must reflect understanding of, and responsiveness to, issues of equity

Goal 4 **NWREL will provide leadership and research and development support for regional efforts to strengthen family and community support for children and schools.**

We are experiencing an increasing national outrage at the plight of growing numbers of our children--larger and larger numbers suffer abuse, neglect, and poverty. A unique convergence of economic, social, and educational

concerns is the result. We increasingly realize that growing numbers of disconnected and dysfunctional individuals threaten our social, as well as our economic, stability. We also are painfully aware that these growing numbers have changed the very nature of our schools and pose unprecedented challenges for the organization and conduct of instruction.

Schools are increasingly recognizing that they must deal with these problems by strengthening the family and community. As the institution which serves all children, schools have a responsibility to assume leadership in seeing that these needs are addressed, but they recognize that they cannot solve the problem alone.

There is a convergence of research that can be utilized to address these problems: research on early intervention which clearly demonstrates increased effectiveness, and research on collaboration which is beginning to demonstrate the power and cost effectiveness of integrated services at the community level. Both clearly show: (a) the importance of a focus on outcomes which the community values for its children; (b) the centrality of strengthening and supporting the family in all its modern forms; and (c) the necessity for new partnerships among schools, businesses, human services agencies, and informal organizations to effectively implement educational programs that will meet the needs of all children.

NWREL, with its history of broad-based governance, planning, and research is in a unique position to contribute to the development of this area as an important mechanism for moving positively into the future.

The Laboratory will work with schools, businesses, human service agencies, and community groups to design, document, and disseminate approaches, derived from the research base, which result in broad, positive improvement.

Goal 5 **NWREL will provide targeted assistance to distressed schools and communities and to policy makers who are attempting to better understand and address their needs.**

Recent dramatic changes in student demographics, as well as the social and economic context of society, have fallen unevenly on the schools and communities of the Northwest. In both rural and urban areas, variations in resources, employment, student achievement, patterns of poverty and substance abuse, and numbers of disconnected citizens and youths have become extreme. These factors are often reflected in the aspirations of youth and families, as well as the expectations of communities for their schools.

Where a large number of these factors exist in combination with one another, substantial numbers of individual schools and communities suffer distress so severe as to make it unlikely that outcomes for the majority of their children will be positive. These schools and communities also suffer decreased ability to mobilize their internal resources for positive action. They tend to be isolated from sources of information and assistance. NWREL will provide assistance to these communities and to policy makers who are attempting to better understand and address their needs.

Goal 6 **NWREL will provide leadership and creative options for the improvement of assessment, impact evaluation, and use of data in educational decision making.**

NWREL's revised mission statement reflects the region wide concern for a focus on outcomes as the key to improving both education and human services. Increasingly, those outcomes go beyond academic achievement to include effective functioning as individuals, citizens, and workers.

Local improvement efforts continue to grow and require assistance with assessment of outcomes. As site-based management grows, building-level capacity to assess outcomes becomes ever more crucial. As teachers increasingly are given true professional status, their capability to assess instruction becomes more important.

A proliferation of state initiatives to improve the conditions of life and learning for children and youth have also emerged. Their focus includes effective functioning as a citizen and worker. Many of these initiatives depend on a policy environment supportive of creative collaboration and flexible use of local resources to achieve locally-valued outcomes. Such initiatives are launched in a context of great competition for resources among a series of societal imperatives. In such a context, assessment of policy cost/benefit and implementation effectiveness assumes equal importance with more traditional assessment efforts. Evaluating the impact of these initiatives requires increasing sophistication in posing the right questions and identifying reasonable and reliable data sources and data sets from which to answer them.

NWREL will build upon its strengths in assessment to provide leadership and creative options for evaluating impact and increasing the use of data in decision making.

Goal 7 **NWREL will expand its research and development capability to provide regional assistance with critical issues of school and public finance.**

Recent social and demographic trends have combined with economic distress to produce widespread concern for both our ability to compete in an international economy and the long-term health of our democratic institutions. These concerns have produced public pressure to both restructure and strengthen our state and local infrastructure--education, communication, transportation, human services--all have been given a high priority.

State policy makers, especially, face unprecedented demands for creative investment of limited resources. School buildings and bridges, child care and higher education, school restructuring and roads--all are pressed as essential investments for our future well-being. Educational finance, in particular, has become increasingly contested as demands for improved outcomes and equity have come up against competing needs and beleaguered funding systems.

In this context, there is a dramatically increasing need for assistance and expertise in the analysis of cost and resource options which can be directly

related to the knowledge base on outcomes. NWREL will expand its capability to provide this assistance.

Activities in the 1992 regional needs assessment process are designed to confirm the validity of the programmatic areas addressed by NWREL's seven Strategic Goals and to identify any shifts in their focus or any new areas not yet being addressed by NWREL's program policy.

C. DATA SOURCES AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

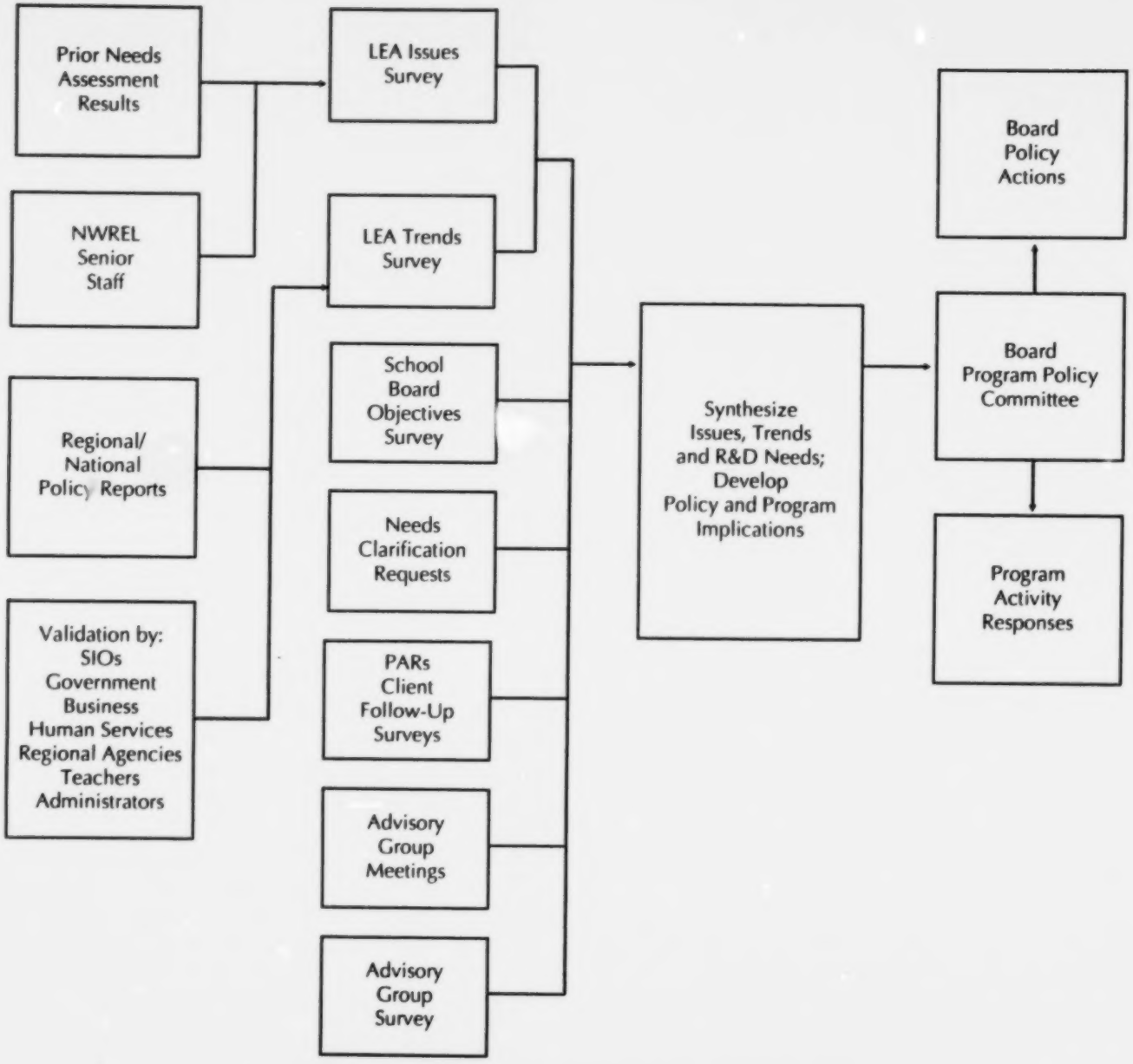
Figure 1 outlines the 1992 regional needs assessment process. Data sources include information from regular reporting systems established at NWREL and activities specifically initiated for needs assessment purposes. Data collection instruments are developed based upon prior needs assessment instruments and results and are modified to address the objectives of the current year's needs assessment. Results from all data sources are synthesized and submitted to the Board Program Policy Committee to determine policy and program implications. These, in turn, are referred, respectively, to the Board of Directors for policy action and to the Program Planning Council, where they are used to guide the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of programmatic work. Results from the 1992 regional needs assessment will become input for the needs assessment efforts to be conducted in 1993 and 1994.

Table 1 displays the various data sources used this year and in recent regional needs assessment efforts. Some of the data sources have become standard over the past several years (an "X" appears in all or nearly all of the years displayed); these provide a method for tracing trends in needs. Other data sources have been developed specifically for a particular year's needs assessment, designed to respond to the objectives and information priorities of that year.

As Table 2 illustrates, the 1992 RNA continues NWREL's needs assessment strategy of using multiple data sources and the viewpoints of multiple constituents. Further, as in prior years, the types of data include objective evidence, survey results, and expert opinion. By drawing on data from a variety of sources, it is possible to define with confidence the breadth of concern and consensus emerging in the region. The methods used to gather needs data from these sources are selected for their: (1) collective ability to accurately represent the perspectives of NWREL's various client groups; (2) methodological soundness and appropriateness for the data sources; (3) sensitivity to emerging as well as current needs; (4) ability to accurately reveal and describe regional needs in terms that suggest the most appropriate R&D approaches and roles for NWREL; and (5) contribution to efficiency and continuity of analysis.

As the figure and tables show, the 1992 RNA continues the annual collection of data from: (1) needs clarification requests for assistance; (2) Professional Activities Reporting System (PARS) client follow-up surveys; and (3) advisory group meetings. These data sources are standard across each year and provide continuity in tracing trends in needs. In addition, input has come from other major activities conducted during this year. These are large scale surveys of (1) local education agencies (LEAs); (2) school boards; and (3) advisory groups. A description of each data source follows.

Two ongoing information collection activities provide data for each annual needs assessment: needs clarification requests for assistance and client follow-up surveys generated by PARS:


Prior Needs Assessment Results
NWREL Senior Staff
Regional/ National Policy Reports
Validation by: SIOs Government Business Human Services Regional Agencies Teachers Administrators
LEA Issues Survey
LEA Trends Survey
School Board Objectives Survey
Needs Clarification Requests
PARs Client Follow-Up Surveys
Advisory Group Meetings
Advisory Group Survey
Synthesize Issues, Trends and R&D Needs; Develop Policy and Program Implications
Board Policy Actions
Board Program Policy Committee
Program Activity Responses

1992 REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Figure 1

Table 1
Regional Needs Assessment Data Sources

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Needs Clarification Requests	X	X	X	X
PARS Follow-Up Surveys	X	X	X	X
Advisory Group Meetings	X	X	X	X
Advisory Group Survey				X
NWREL Senior Staff	X	X	X	X
LEA Survey	X			X
School Board Objectives Survey	X			X
Rural Forums	X			
Key SIO Meetings	X			
Validation Survey				
SIO leaders	X	X	X	
Government leaders		X	X	
Business leaders		X	X	
Roundtables			X	
Foundations		X	X	
Board members' constituents		X	X	
State human services			X	
Regional agencies			X	
NWREL Board members			X	
NWREL Research & Policy Studies		X	X	
Regional/National Policy Reports			X	
Key Informant Phone Interviews			X	

Table 2
Sources of 1992 Needs Information

Source	Informants	Type of Data: Objective Evidence	Type of Data: Survey Results	Type of Data: Expert Opinion
Needs Clarification Requests	LEA Staff SEA Staff Higher Ed Public Agencies Other	X		
PARS Client Follow-Up Surveys	NWREL Clients		X	
Advisory Groups	Practitioners and policy makers in LEAs, SEAs, SIOs			X
LEA Survey	Local educators: Teachers Principals Superintendents		X	
School Board Objectives Survey	School boards	X		
Advisory Group Survey	Practitioners and policy makers in LEAs, SEAs, SIOs		X	

- **Needs clarification requests**. NWREL receives direct requests for assistance from practitioners throughout the region to help in clarifying needs and to develop plans to resolve problems they themselves have identified. Such field-initiated requests constitute an important source of needs assessment information, as they suggest the issues of most pressing need among educators for the types of R&D assistance that a regional educational laboratory is designed to provide. NWREL maintains a log of all such requests. The nature of the 148 requests received over the past fiscal year was analyzed for inclusion in this report. The requests for assistance provide a picture of the immediate, direct problems schools, districts, and state agencies are seeking to address.

- **PARS client follow-up surveys**. Consumers of NWREL products and services are an important source of information about future needs. Upon completion of a transaction or contractual relationship with clients, NWREL routinely requests their feedback on the services they received and, relevant here, on perceived future needs. In the past year, 188 clients completed and returned follow-up surveys (nearly 50 percent of the 380 surveyed). Their responses regarding future needs were content analyzed and are included in this report. The survey form can be found in Appendix A.

Each year, needs data are also extrapolated from the meetings of NWREL's advisory groups:

- **Advisory groups**. NWREL has formed an advisory group to address program policy and work towards each of the seven Strategic Goals, as well as other key work areas. Topics and concerns discussed during advisory group meetings offer insight regarding current and emerging needs and reflect expert practitioners' perspectives on: improving the outcomes of schooling, enhancing the education profession, enhancing equitable treatment of students, healthy schools and communities, strengthening capability to assess outcomes, strengthening family and community support for children and schools, school and public finance, Indian education, and rural education.

Data sources or activities that are unique in the 1992 RNA include:

- **Local education agency (LEA) survey.** NWREL conducted a survey of all school district superintendents (N = 902) and a sample of principals (N = 917) and teachers (N = 1,870) in the region to solicit information regarding educational priorities, current and emerging issues, and related assistance needs. To improve teacher response to the LEA survey, NWREL obtained mailing lists from each state department of education so that surveys could be mailed directly to specific teachers and not to school principals for distribution to a teacher representative, as in the past. The LEA survey provides a representative sample of opinion on how the region's practitioners see their current needs and the impact of emerging issues increasingly affecting education. The response rate of 23 percent provides a statistically valid representation of each of the three professional categories. This response rate, while adequate, is lower than in the past (32 percent in 1989), resulting likely because of the timing of the survey (it was distributed in the spring rather than in the fall as in 1989).

Two forms of the survey were developed and then piloted by 15 classroom teachers and school administrators. Both versions of the survey solicited practitioners' own priorities and assistance needs through open-ended questions. The respondents then rated the effect on their work of either 32 current issues identified by NWREL in its 1990 and 1991 regional needs assessments or 12 major emerging issues identified in 1991 through a review of major national, regional, and NWREL policy studies and reports. Appendices B and C contain copies of the two versions of the survey.

A phone survey of a 10 percent sample of non-respondents (N = 286) indicated little bias in the results of the LEA survey. Respondents and non-respondents appeared to share similar views on current and emerging needs.

- **School board objectives survey.** NWREL solicited statements of local school board goals, objectives, and/or priorities from all school boards in the region (N = 902). Nearly 21 percent provided information, a statistically valid sample. Relevant materials (81 percent of those submitted to NWREL) were content analyzed and the results are reported here. The purpose of this analysis was to reveal current and emerging school board priorities, so materials describing on-going goals and objectives (19 percent) were excluded from the analysis, including vision and mission statements, education philosophy statements, school board responsibilities and functions, and comprehensive lists of student learner outcomes or goals.

- **Advisory group survey.** To obtain more specific information regarding the types of R&D assistance NWREL could provide in addressing emerging issues in the region, members of NWREL's advisory groups (described above) were surveyed (N = 105). Nearly 50 percent of the members responded to the questionnaire which asked them to rate the impact of 12 major emerging issues on their work and suggest appropriate R&D assistance approaches for each issue. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix D.

These data sources reflect the three objectives of this year's needs assessment design. Current issues, major emerging issues, and related R&D assistance needs identified this year, and the shifts they reflect from previous years' needs, suggest potential areas to be addressed by NWREL in upcoming years. Implications for NWREL's policy and program development have been determined from the findings of these needs assessment activities and are reported in the final chapter of this document.

III. DEPICTION OF THE NORTHWEST REGION

A. GEOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE REGION

The NWREL region encompasses five states: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. About 10 million people live in the region, distributed unevenly among the five states. The largest population inhabits the smallest state--Washington has a population of nearly five million. The smallest population lives in the largest state--Alaska has a population of approximately half a million.

According to the newly released 1990 census figures, the Western States (specifically Alaska and Idaho) were the fastest growing states between April 1990 and July 1991. Oregon was not far behind (#5 in overall rankings of fastest growing states) and in fact, in Oregon, the population is growing at about double the national average. Alaska grew by 3.7 percent to 570,000 people; Idaho gained 3.2 percent to 1,040,000 people. They were followed by Washington state (up 3.1 percent) to 5,018,000 and Oregon (2.8 percent) to 2,922,000. Montana ranked #13 in growth, up 1.2 percent to 808,000. Total population of the NWREL region is 10,357,000.

Public school enrollment in kindergarten through grade 12 during the last two school years is displayed in Table 3. During the two year period, two states (Idaho and Oregon) grew in public school enrollment, two states (Montana and Washington) maintained their public school enrollments, and one state (Alaska) declined in public school enrollment by approximately 6,000 students. Overall, from 1990 to 1993 public school enrollment in the region grew by nearly 8,000 students.

Table 3
Public School Enrollment

	1990-1991	1991-1992
Alaska	116,000	110,366
Idaho	215,000	220,840
Montana	152,000	152,000
Oregon	469,000	476,522
Washington	827,000	827,000
Total	1,779,000	1,786,728

Source: "Statistical Abstract of the U.S.," 1991, 1992, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Minority student population in the region is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Minority Student Population

State	Grades	Asian/ Pacific	Black	Hispanic	Alaska Native/ Native American
Alaska	PK-12	3,977 3.6%	4,836 4.4%	2,094 1.9%	24,441 22.4%
Idaho	K-12	1,760 0.8%	687 0.3%	10,557 4.9%	2,832 1.3%
Montana	K-12	1,041 0.7%	446 0.3%	1,784 1.2%	13,680 9.2%
Oregon	PK-12	13,095 2.8%	11,238 2.4%	18,742 4.0%	8,079 1.7%
Washington	K-12	41,534 5.3%	32,184 4.1%	37,689 4.8%	18,868 2.4%

Sources: Profiles of Alaska's Public School Districts, FY90, Office of Data Management.
Idaho: Digest of Education Statistics, 1990, U.S. Dept. of Education, OERI.
A Plan for American Indian Education in Montana, January, 1991, Montana SPI.
1989 - 90 Summary of Organization, Students, and Staff in Oregon Public Schools, Oregon DOE.
Minority Enrollment Summary for Washington State School Districts for 1988 - 89 School Year, Washington SPI.

In the NWREL region, there are almost 5,000 schools and 94,000 teachers comprising the facilities and instructional staff of 1,308 local districts. The vast majority of the region's districts are small and rural.

Federal aid to education varies within the region, but with the exception of Alaska, represents less than 10 percent of the region's educational resources: Alaska (11 percent), Idaho (9 percent), Montana (8 percent), Oregon (7 percent), and Washington (6 percent).

The region's five states with a total population of 10,357,000 encompass 982,268 square miles--more than 27 percent of the nation's land mass. It is the only region intersected by another nation, Canada, and whose climatic zones range from arctic through temperate. From a geographic and economic perspective, the region actually exists as six distinct subregions:

1. **Western Coast**. The Pacific coast of Oregon, Washington, and southeast Alaska is a narrow band stretching from Brookings, Oregon to the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska. Populations tend to be clustered in villages and small towns along the sea coast. Fishing, forest products, and tourism provide the economic base.

2. **Central Valley**. Nestled between the Coast and Cascade mountain ranges of Oregon and Washington and the Chugach and Alaska ranges of central Alaska, these fertile lowlands have the highest population concentrations in the Northwest. This area enjoys the greatest economic diversity of the region, with manufacturing,

agriculture, forest products, international trade, and retail commerce contributing to the wealth and stability of the region.

3. **Great Basin**. This semiarid high plateau, a vast region between the Cascade Range and Rocky Mountains, includes eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, and southern Idaho. Agriculture is the mainstay of this sparsely populated area. Large-scale ranching, dryland grain farming and, in irrigated areas, fruit and vegetable production, supply food for the region, nation, and world.

4. **Rocky Mountains**. This area of northern Idaho and western Montana covers an area 200 miles wide and 300 miles long from Boise to Bonners Ferry. Forest products, ranching, mining, and tourism help support the economy. Populations are clustered in small towns located in isolated valleys.

5. **Great Plains**. Eastern Montana is 400 miles wide and 300 miles along. Oil, coal, and ranching are the economic base for this sparsely populated area where vast distances separate commercial centers.

6. **Interior Alaska**. Between the Bering Sea to the west, the Arctic Ocean to the north, the Yukon Territory to the east, and the Alaska Range to the south, this sparsely populated area is in part based on a subsistence economy. Oil and mining have been the "absentee landlords" of the region, providing limited employment opportunities for local residents, but contributing to the economy of the state as a whole.

Within this diverse geographic and economic context, there are dramatic contrasts in the lifestyles and cultures of the people. While vast stretches of the region are rural, the corridor from Eugene to Seattle is an increasingly urbanized area which is home to more than three million people. In this area, the pervasive regional economic shift from forestry and an agriculture-oriented economy to services and high-tech manufacturing, with accompanying demands for scientific and technological expertise, is dramatically apparent.

- The Seattle area is now the world's largest center for software development (both Microsoft and Nintendo have their headquarters there).

- Portland area universities, research centers, and industries employ some of the world's leading researchers and practitioners in such fields as microbiology, heart disease, materials science, and biotechnology.

- Near Tacoma and throughout the Puget Sound area, the transportation industry--Boeing's sprawling aircraft and aerospace operations as well as shipbuilding and rail car manufacturing--require tens of thousands of specialized personnel.

- In Portland's "silicon forest," Tektronix, Intel, Epson, Fujitsu Electronics, Wacker Siltronic, Hewlett Packard, and other companies produce instruments, components, and microprocessor equipment for worldwide markets.

- All along the urban corridor are hundreds of small and large companies that develop and produce products requiring staff with mathematical, technological, and scientific skills.

These urban areas also contain great cultural diversity--there are as many as 45 languages spoken in the major cities, for example, and the number is growing. Other challenges associated with demographic shifts also are present. While only 4.5 percent of the people in the corridor are African American, African Americans comprise 18.7 percent of the K-12 enrollment in the urban schools, yet only 2.2 percent of university enrollment. The central core districts of the urban corridor have a minority enrollment of nearly 40 percent and that, too, is growing.

For the rural areas of the region, natural resource industries have prevailed for more than a century. However, like the Pacific beaver trade of the 1800s, these economies view a dismal future. Timberlands are foreshadowed by the spotted owl. Oil and mineral resources are stained by the Exxon Valdez. Fisheries are threatened by foreign drift nets. Agriculture is stunted by the international trade imbalance. Yet, psychologically, the Northwest is a cohesive and progressive region which is adapting to these economic changes.

B. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION'S DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

Schools and communities are dramatically influenced by this context. Size, rurality, isolation, poverty, and ethnicity also interact to add to the diversity of the region's schools. An overview of the demographic characteristics and financial resources of the region's school districts is provided in Table 5.

School District Size. Here, too, the diversity of the region is apparent. While 77 percent of the region's 1,308 districts are small (under 1,000), they serve only about 14 percent of the students. By contrast, the ten school districts which participate in NWREL's Urban Superintendent's network service nearly 15 percent. Given such extremes, the challenges for improvement range from overcrowding and demands for increased building-level autonomy to limited course offerings and support services for curriculum, staff development, and special programs. In the middle, we find 23 percent of the districts serving 71 percent of the region's students. These medium size suburban districts face other challenges--unpredictable growth and increasing population diversity. The ebb and flow of highly mobile white collar and blue collar families challenge these schools to respond to an increasingly broader range of values, aspirations, and demands for services.

A summary of school district enrollments for the region is provided in Table 6.

School District Rurality. Rurality is, in essence, a measure of population density --the interaction between size of the population and size of the geographic area. While rural communities are not exclusively agricultural communities, the rural economy tends to focus on the extraction and/or production of natural resources. By definition, rural areas do not have the labor force to directly support large-scale manufacturing, heavy industry, commercial trade, and finance. For schools, this limits the tax base on the one hand and increases transportation costs on the other hand. Eight in ten school districts in the region are in settings where 75 percent or more of the residents are classified as rural--living in towns or villages of 2,500 people or less, or in unincorporated areas.

Table 5

Demographic Characterics and Financial Resources

	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington	Region
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS						TOTAL
Number of students	110,366	220,840	152,000	476,522	827,000	1,786,728
Percent Minority	32%	7%	7%	11%	17%	15%
Number of Teachers	6,492	10,715	9,627	26,744	40,279	93,857
Number of Schools	472	565	775	1,203	1,852	4,867
Number of Districts	54	115	548	295	296	1,308
a. Percent Small	88%	83%	96%	81%	77%	87%
b. Percent Rural	81%	70%	89%	71%	67%	77%
Percent Small & Rural	77%	67%	88%	69%	64%	76%
FINANCIAL RESOURCES						AVERAGE
Per Capita Income	$21,688	$15,249	$15,270	$17,196	$18,775	
Expenditure per Pupil	$7,716	$2,838	$4,293	$5,182	$4,352	$4,876
Percent Revenue from Federal Funds	11%	9%	8%	7%	6%	8%

Notes:

a. "Small" is defined as fewer than 2,500 students.

b: "Rural" is defined as more than 75% of the students living in rural settings.

Sources: Statistical Abstract of the U.S., U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1992.
State Profiles of Public Elementary and Secondary Education, NCES, October, 1990.
Digest of Education Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1990.

Table 6

Number and Percentage of School Districts by Enrollment Size

	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Total Districts	54	115	548	295	296
Total Enrollment	110,366	220,840	152,000	476,522	827,000
25,000+	1 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (.98%)	4 (1.3%)
24,999-10,000	1 (1.8%)	3 (2.6%)	1 (.18%)	5 (1.6%)	18 (6%)
9,999-7,500	2 (3.6%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (.18%)	3 (.98%)	6 (2%)
7,499-5,000	0 (0%)	6 (5.2%)	1 (.18%)	16 (5.3%)	16 (5.4%)
4,999-2,500	3 (5.4%)	10 (8.6%)	2 (.36%)	20 (6.5%)	32 (10.8%)
2,499-2,000	1 (1.8%)	8 (6.9%)	1 (.18%)	16 (5.3%)	11 (3.7%)
1,999-1,500	3 (5.4%)	11 (9.5%)	5 (.90%)	17 (5.5%)	21 (7%)
1,499-1,000	2 (3.6%)	9 (7.8%)	20 (3.6%)	19 (6.2%)	26 (8.8%)
999-800	1 (1.8%)	9 (7.8%)	9 (1.6%)	17 (5.5%)	14 (4.7%)
799-600	3 (5.4%)	9 (7.8%)	20 (3.6%)	17 (5.5%)	22 (7.4%)
599-450	7 (12.7%)	8 (6.9%)	35 (6.3%)	19 (6.2%)	21 (7%)
449-300	11 (20%)	11 (9.5%)	45 (8.1%)	17 (5.5%)	20 (6.7%)
299-150	9 (16.3%)	16 (13.9%)	70 (12.7%)	46 (15.1%)	30 (10.1%)
149-1	11 (20%)	13 (11.3%)	340 (61.8%)	89 (29.2%)	55 (18.6%)

Source: State Profiles of Public Elementary and Secondary Education, NCES, U.S. Dept. of Ed., October 1990.

A summary of rural school districts in the region is provided in Table 7.

Table 7

Distribution of Rural School Districts in the Region

	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington	Total
Total Number of Districts	54	115	548	295	296	1,308
Total Number of Rural Districts	44	80	489	219	198	1,030
Percent of Rural Districts	81%	70%	89%	74%	67%	79%
Total Number of Students	110,366	220,840	152,000	476,522	827,000	1,786,728
Total Number of Students in Rural Districts	34,800	58,050	53,200	93,800	140,590	380,440
Percent of Students in Rural Districts	32%	26%	35%	20%	17%	21%

When school district size and rurality are taken together, 76 percent of the region's school districts are both small and rural, serving 16 percent of the students. Conversely, 24 percent are non-rural and serve 84 percent of the students.

Isolation. Isolation is a separate issue from rurality. Isolation is represented by the relative cost, frequency, and ease with which access can be obtained to resources outside the school or district. Communication and transportation are hampered by distance, geography, weather, and the technology available. Telecommunications--telephone and television--are today's standard technologies for communication. Automobile travel by public road is today's standard technology for transportation. The ramifications for the region's isolated rural schools and districts include limited access to professional development activities,

special services, and opportunities for collaboration as well as barriers to the attraction and retention of qualified staff. Because of vast distances, public boarding school programs continue to this day in Alaska and Oregon.

The six geo-economic regions of NWREL, and the schools which they contain, have different isolating conditions. Many urban schools and districts also experience isolation, although in different ways. Theirs is the isolation imposed by conditions such as resegregation, discrimination, poverty, drug trafficking, and street gangs. These, too, can be devastating in their effect on access to resources from outside the school and district and ultimately on outcomes for students.

Table 8 provides a summary of isolated districts in the region.

Table 8

Distribution of Isolated School Districts in the Region

	Isolated Districts		Non-Isolated Districts	
State	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Idaho	53	46%	62	54%
Montana	445	81%	105	19%
Oregon	116	39%	188	64%
Washington	106	36%	190	64%
Total	720	57%	545	43%

Beyond issues of size and sparsity, geographic isolation poses constraints on transportation and communication. Access to goods, services, and professional development opportunities is limited by physical distance. For example, in the four lower Northwest states, 58 percent of the school districts are located 30 or more miles from population centers of 15,000 or more. With the exception of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, essentially all of Alaska is considered to be isolated.

Poverty. Urban poverty has received a great deal of attention for a number of years. But rural poverty persists as well and has grown over the past ten years due to the economic downturn in fishing, forest products, agriculture, mining, and oil. Trade deficits have added to the impact in the Pacific Rim. Rural poverty reduces the state and local resources available to support education, both in terms of the revenue generated and the public's willingness to support bond issues at the polls.

In the five states, 25 percent of the 884 small, rural school districts have more than 20 percent of their families with incomes below the poverty level. The incidence of poverty is higher in interior Alaska.

Ethnicity. Cultural differences exist in both the rural and urban areas of the region. Educationally, the ramifications are threefold. First, in unicultural settings, students may lack exposure to, and appreciation of, cultural differences. Second, limited English proficiency may impede students' school performance. Third, goals for education are dramatically influenced by the culture of the community. These goals may conflict with state standards and expectations.

Native Americans, Alaska natives, Hispanics, and whites comprise the major ethnic groups in the rural areas of the region. Alaskan village schools are generally unicultural, as are most of the rural schools in the Great Basin, Rocky Mountains, and Great Plains areas. Bicultural communities are found in southeast Alaska and the rural reservation schools of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Multicultural rural schools are found in the Western Coast and Central Valley areas.

The urban areas contain even greater ethnic diversity--there are as many as 45 identifiable languages and cultures in the western cities. Typically, each ethnic minority is a relatively small percentage. However, the central core districts in the urban corridor have a minority enrollment of nearly 40 percent. For example, in Seattle schools, all groups are in the minority (46 percent white, 24 percent African American, 21 percent Asian, 6 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Native American).

Other Contextual Factors. General trends in the socioeconomic conditions of the region have also influenced the schools. In particular, the mobility of the population has increased in traditionally stable rural communities. The population is aging, which results in both declining enrollments and reduced patron support for schools. The number of single parent and nontraditional families is increasing in both rural and urban settings. The schools are experiencing societal pressures to deal with the increase in child abuse, substance abuse, and latchkey children. The small, rural schools have neither the resources nor access to the services needed to deal with these emerging problems, while service delivery is fragmented in the urban setting. The rural school and community can no longer be viewed as the quaint, pastoral foundation of American family traditions any more than the urban school can be seen as the focal point of cohesive ethnic neighborhoods. The nostalgic past is gone. In its place is a dynamic modern region with all the promises and pitfalls associated with the coming of the information society and the 21st century. In such a region, as in the nation as a whole, meeting the needs for a strong education is the key to the future.

IV. NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

This chapter presents major findings derived from the 1992 RNA activities described in the first chapter. In order to develop both an immediate and longer term sense of the region's assistance needs, regional needs are looked at from two perspectives: (1) current issues and (2) major emerging issues.

The first section of this chapter presents findings regarding current issues and concerns facing educators in the Northwest. Information on current needs is derived from sections of the LEA survey, the school board objectives survey, needs clarification requests, PARS client follow-up surveys, and advisory group discussions.

The second section focuses on major issues which are increasingly affecting educators in the region. Sections of the LEA survey and the advisory group survey provide information about emerging issues which suggests how educators' needs will develop over coming years.

The final section of this chapter reports R&D assistance needs related to the current and emerging issues identified by 1992 RNA activities. Together, these three discussions offer insight which can guide immediate and mid- to long-range planning of NWREL program priorities. They will serve to inform the Board Program Policy Committee as it pursues its annual reexamination of NWREL program policy.

A. CURRENT ISSUES FACING NORTHWEST EDUCATORS

Information on the issues currently being addressed by educators in the region provides insight into their most pressing and immediate concerns and interests. Findings from the major data sources used specifically this year to gather current needs information, namely the LEA survey and school board objectives survey, are described first. These data sources provide a broad base of needs information, soliciting the views of large numbers of local practitioners and policy makers in schools and districts throughout the region. Findings from the three data sources used annually to trace changes in regional needs follow. These routine data sources are: (1) needs clarification requests for assistance; (2) PARS client follow-up surveys; and (3) advisory group meetings. Because of their ongoing nature and because they are field-initiated, these sources reveal continuity and shifts in regional concerns over time. Each of these data sources is discussed in terms of trends seen across four years that data have been collected (1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992) and their alignment with NWREL's Strategic Goals.

1. LEA Survey: Local Educators' Priority Concerns

All respondents to the LEA survey were asked to describe their own priority concerns for educational improvement. Analysis of the 2,194 priorities reported by the respondents (697 from superintendents, 607 from principals, and 890 from teachers) fell into seven issue areas: curriculum and instruction; school structure, governance and finance; student needs; education profession; technology; family and community involvement and support; and student assessment. Figure 2 provides an overview of priority concerns expressed by superintendents, principals, and teachers.

Current Issues Reflected in Local Educators' Priority Concerns

(N = 2,194)

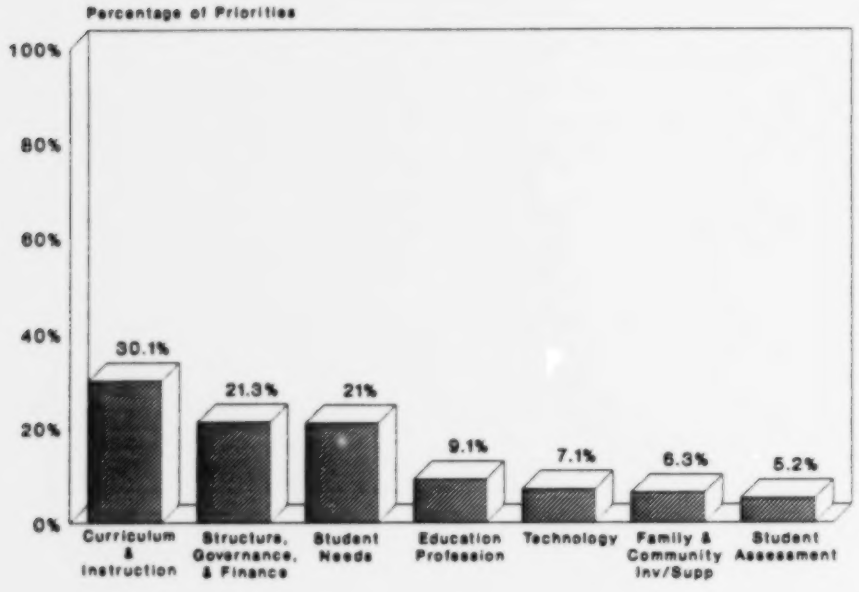


Figure 2

A phone survey of 10 percent of the non-respondents (N = 286) indicated little bias in the results of the LEA survey. The priorities expressed by non-respondents were similar to those of the respondents and are summarized below after the discussion of respondents' priorities.

Curriculum and instruction. The most widely cited priority area is curriculum and instruction (30 percent of all priorities expressed). Priorities in this area were cited by the highest percentages of teachers (37 percent of priorities) and principals (29 percent of priorities) and second highest percentage of superintendents (23 percent of priorities), relative to other areas.

There is widespread interest in revising curriculum in specific subject areas (particularly math, science, reading, and language), developing and integrating curriculum (developing an interdisciplinary approach and incorporating skills across the curriculum, including critical thinking skills, writing, cooperative learning, and decision making), and implementing outcome-based education. Vocational education, technical training, job skills, career training and counseling, applied academics, and work related internship opportunities were cited as priorities by many superintendents, principals, and teachers. Interest in nongraded primary and multiage classroom options was also broadly expressed across respondent groups, as was developmentally appropriate practice. Multicultural education, cultural awareness and respect, and bilingual programs were also cited as priorities. Among teachers especially, inclusion and mainstreaming of students with special needs is a current priority.

School structure, governance, and finance. There is widespread concern about school structure, governance, and finance issues (over 21 percent of all priorities expressed). Relative to other areas, this area was of concern to the largest percentage of superintendents (32 percent of priorities) and to the third highest percentages of principals (18 percent of priorities) and teachers (15 percent of priorities).

Restructuring, funding, and facilities were expressed as priorities by top percentages of all respondent groups. Restructuring issues included implementing state initiated reform requirements, modifying middle and high school organizational structures, and implementing school day and year scheduling changes. Funding priorities included establishing stable, equitable, long-term funding solutions and maintaining program quality while facing cut backs. Facilities issues included increased need for space to alleviate overcrowded classrooms and improvement and remodeling of existing facilities for safety purposes and to support program and student needs. Highest on the priority list for teachers was reducing class size, and respondents indicated that both facilities improvement and staff increases would address this problem. Site-based decision making and management were widely shared priorities among superintendents, principals, and teachers, as were strategic and long range planning.

Student needs. Overall, 21 percent of the local educators who responded to the survey cited priorities in this area. Issues related to student needs, relative to other issues, were cited by the second highest percentages of teachers and principals (23 percent of teachers' priorities and 25 percent of principals' priorities) and by the third highest percentage of superintendents (15 percent of superintendents' priorities).

Meeting the needs of all students, as well as meeting the needs of students with special needs, students who are at-risk of school failure, students who are gifted and talented, and students from dysfunctional families, were priorities for large percentages of superintendents, principals, and teachers. The effects of inclusion and mainstreaming on students with special needs and on students in the rest of the class was cited as a priority

by many respondents in all three groups. Improving student achievement and reducing behavior and discipline problems were especially high on the list of local educators' priorities.

Other widely shared priorities included: increasing cultural awareness and respect among students and staff; improving students' self esteem and motivation; and improving student-staff relations, student interaction, and school climate. Increasing the numbers of counselors available to students and improving counseling and guidance services were also priorities among local educators, as were reducing dropout rates and drug and alcohol use and abuse. Teachers and principals expressed concern regarding meeting the needs of bilingual students and students whose English skills are limited. Teachers and superintendents indicated that student, staff, and family acceptance of responsibility and accountability for students' education is a priority.

Education profession. Eight percent of teachers' priorities, 10 percent of principals' priorities, and 10 percent of superintendents' priorities focused on aspects of the education profession. Overall, nine percent of all priorities expressed were in this area.

Among teachers, optimizing time was the most widely cited priority, followed by improved communication and collaboration among staff, relevant training opportunities, improved teacher motivation and morale, retention of quality staff, and increased administrator support for innovation and change.

Among principals, improved instructional skills and techniques, improved staff development and training, increased team teaching and staff communication, and enhanced staff motivation and morale were priorities cited by many respondents. A large percentage of principals also indicated that improving supervision, observation, and evaluation of staff was of current concern.

Among superintendents, commonly shared priorities included improving staff development and leadership training, updating instructional approaches, strengthening teacher accountability and responsibility for student outcomes, increasing cooperative teaching, improving staff morale, and dealing effectively with personnel issues including hiring practices, prep time, and contract negotiations. Changing educators' roles and staff attitudes were also important issues cited by superintendents.

Technology. Concern about increasing the use of technology, integrating technology into the curriculum, and staying up-to-date with technological advances accounted for seven percent of all priorities cited (10 percent of superintendents' priorities, seven percent of principals' priorities, and five percent of teachers' priorities). Additional concerns expressed included: increasing available resources; implementing telecommunications, networking, and distance education; long range planning; and staff training.

Family and community involvement and support. Over six percent of the priorities expressed by local educators were related to strengthening family and community involvement and support. Seven percent of principals' and teachers' priorities, and five percent of superintendents' priorities, were related to this area.

Specific to families, local educators focused on increasing parent involvement, particularly with respect to taking more responsibility for their child's education, directly supporting their child's educational success, supporting and achieving high standards, and participating in school activities and decision making. Improving relations between home and school, increasing parent education opportunities, and improving early childhood education programs, were also cited as priorities for strengthening family involvement.

With respect to community, local educators again focused on increased involvement in the education process, classrooms, school decision making, and school activities. Improved relations with the broader community were also cited as priorities for strengthening community support of schools and education. Other priorities included: developing partnerships and collaborative relationships with business, industry, and community agencies; integrating social services with education; increasing employer support for parent involvement in schools; and sharing the responsibility of educating students and meeting student needs.

Student assessment. Although student assessment is linked with curriculum and instruction, and could be analyzed within that area, student assessment issues constituted a visible, reportable, percentage of local educators' priorities (over five percent). Six percent of superintendents' priorities and five percent of principals' and teachers' priorities indicated that student assessment is a current focus. Specific issues in this area included: further development and implementation of alternative assessments, performance-based and authentic assessment, and portfolios; alignment of assessment with curriculum and instruction; revision of report cards and grading procedures; and use of appropriate standardized testing methods.

Priority concerns of non-respondents. A similar pattern of priorities emerged in phone conversations with superintendents, principals, and teachers who did not respond to the LEA survey. As with respondents, the areas of most concern to non-respondents were related to curriculum and instruction; school structure, governance, and finance; and student needs. Within curriculum and instruction, non-respondents focused on curriculum integration, improving math and science instruction, strengthening vocational education, developing tech prep programs, and implementing outcome-based education. School structure, governance, and finance priorities expressed by non-respondents included increasing funding, lowering class size, implementing site-based management and decision-making, strategic planning, and implementing state reform initiatives. With regard to meeting student needs, non-respondents view the improvement of student achievement, discipline, self-esteem and motivation as a priority. Integrating students with special needs and meeting the needs of at-risk students were also expressed as priorities.

Other areas of concern to respondents were also expressed by non-respondents. Staff development and training were priorities for many non-respondents, as were staff collaboration and recruitment of people into the education profession. Several non-respondents emphasized integrating and increasing the use of technology in schools. Increasing family and community support, involvement, and partnerships, and developing early childhood programs were priorities for others. The improvement and further development of student assessment methods was also expressed as a priority by some non-respondents.

2. LEA Survey: Current Issues

Half of the respondents to the LEA survey were asked to assess a set of issues that had previously been identified by NWREL. Overall, 1,845 superintendents, principals, and teachers received the current issue version of the survey and 25 percent responded. Local educators were asked to indicate: (1) the effect each issue is currently having on their work; and (2) the specific assistance they would like most in addressing each issue. (A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.) Responses to the first survey question, regarding the current effect of issues on local educators' work, are described for all local educators combined and for each respondent group separately and then

summarized in a matrix at the end of this section. Responses to the second question, regarding assistance needs, are summarized in the final section of this chapter.

Issues affecting local educators. Figures 3 and 4 display issues of current concern to local educators (superintendents, principals, and teachers combined) who responded to the LEA survey. Issues affecting more than 80 percent of all respondents (N = 466) were:

1. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem (86 percent)
2. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum (83 percent)
3. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (83 percent)
4. Assuring adequate funding of education (83 percent)
5. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education (82 percent)
6. Developing student performance assessment methods (80 percent)
7. Enhancing school climate (80 percent)
8. Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices (80 percent)

Issues having a *major* effect on at least 40 percent of all respondents (N = 466) were:

1. Assuring adequate funding for education (61 percent)
2. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (50 percent)
3. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem
4. Assuring equitable school funding (45 percent)
5. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education (44 percent)
6. Developing student performance assessment methods (43 percent)
7. Reorganizing/restructuring schooling (43 percent)
8. Meeting the needs of diverse student populations (41 percent)
9. Applying technology in instruction, management, and policy-making (40 percent)

Issues affecting superintendents. Figures 5 and 6 present the issues for which superintendents indicated current concern. Issues affecting more than 80 percent of superintendents (N = 152) were:

1. Applying technology in instruction, management, and policy-making (90 percent)
2. Assuring adequate funding for education (88 percent)
3. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum (86 percent)

Issues Currently Affecting More than 80% of Local Educators

(N = 466)

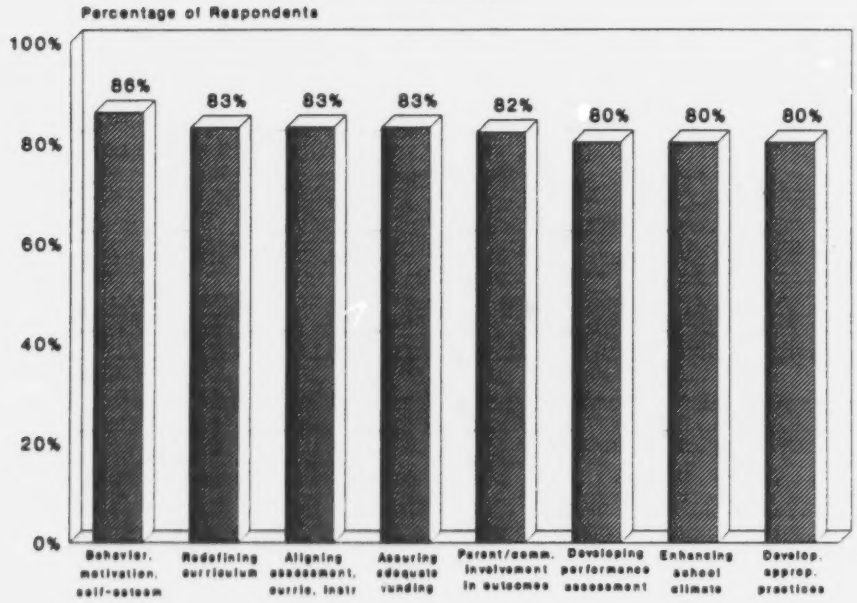


Figure 3

Issues Currently Having a Major Effect on at Least 40% of Local Educators

(N = 466)

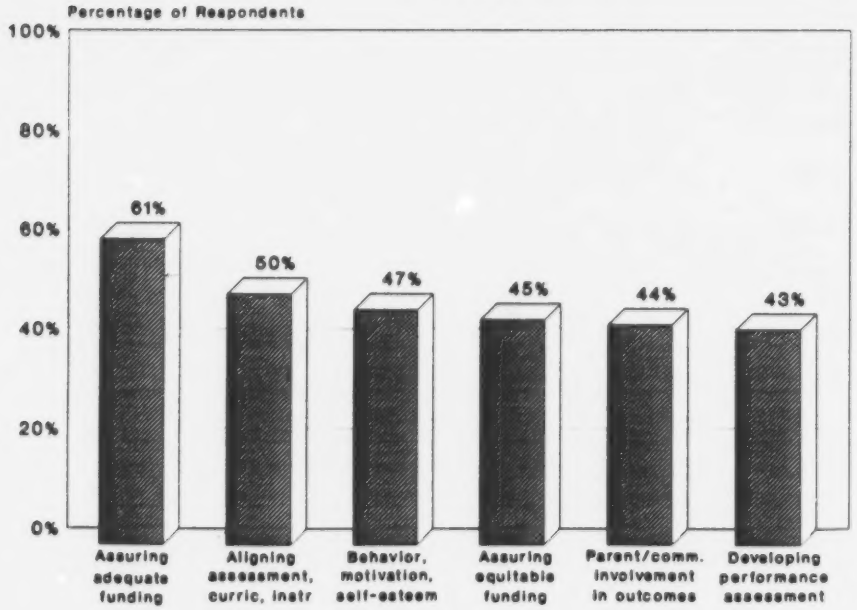


Figure 4

Issues Currently Affecting More than 80% of Superintendents

(N = 152)

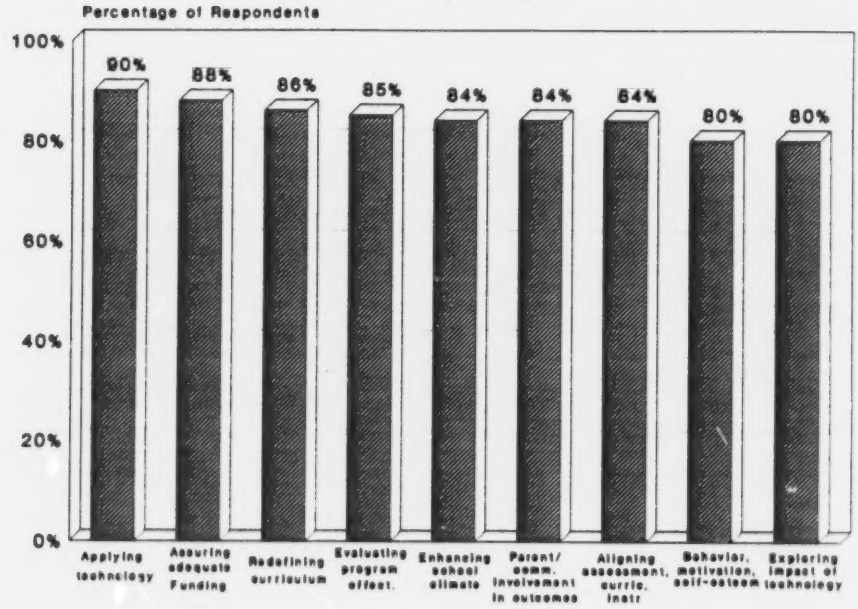


Figure 5

Issues Currently Having a Major Effect on at Least 40% of Superintendents

(N = 152)

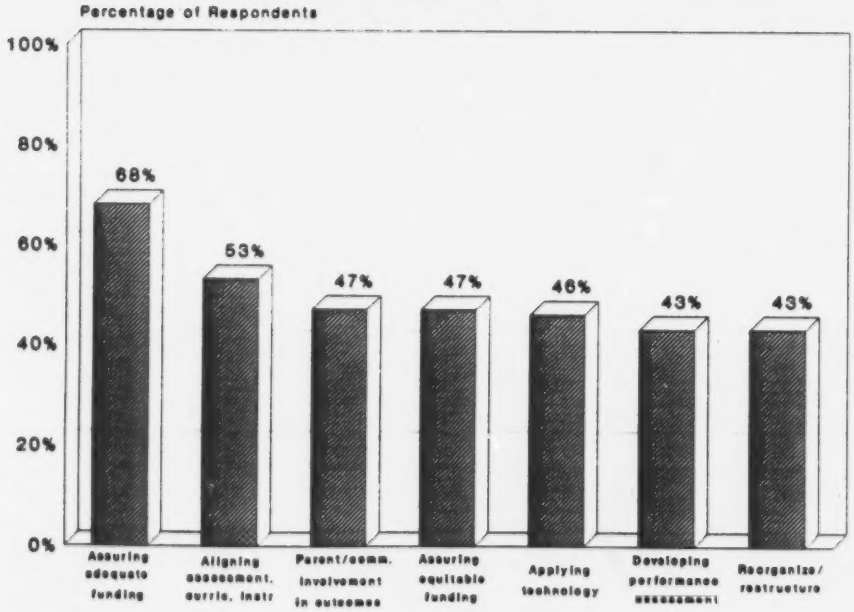


Figure 6

4. Evaluating program effectiveness (85 percent)

5. Enhancing school climate (84 percent)

6. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes (84 percent)

7. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (84 percent)

8. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem (80 percent)

9. Exploring the impact of changing technology on schools and attitudes (80 percent)

Issues having a *major* effect on at least 40 percent of superintendents (N = 152) were:

1. Assuring adequate funding for education (68 percent)

2. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (53 percent)

3. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education (47 percent)

4. Assuring equitable school funding (47 percent)

5. Applying technology in instruction, management, and policy-making (46 percent)

6. Developing student performance assessment methods (43 percent)

7. Reorganizing/restructuring schooling (43 percent)

8. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum (41 percent)

Issues affecting principals. Issues of current concern to many principals in the region are displayed in Figures 7 and 8. Those issues affecting more than 80 percent of principals (N = 134) were:

1. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem (90 percent)

2. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum (85 percent)

3. Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices (84 percent)

4. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (84 percent)

5. Increasing parent and community involvement in meeting noneducational needs of children (83 percent)

6. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education (80 percent)

7. Enhancing school climate (80 percent)

8. Developing student performance assessment methods (80 percent)

Issues Currently Affecting More than 80% of Principals

(N = 134)

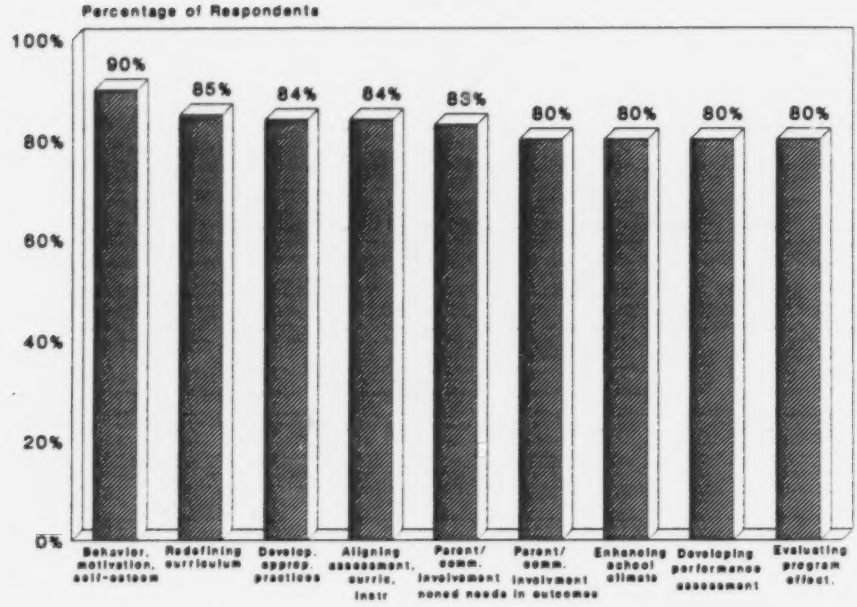


Figure 7

Issues Currently Having a Major Effect on at Least 40% of Principals

(N = 134)

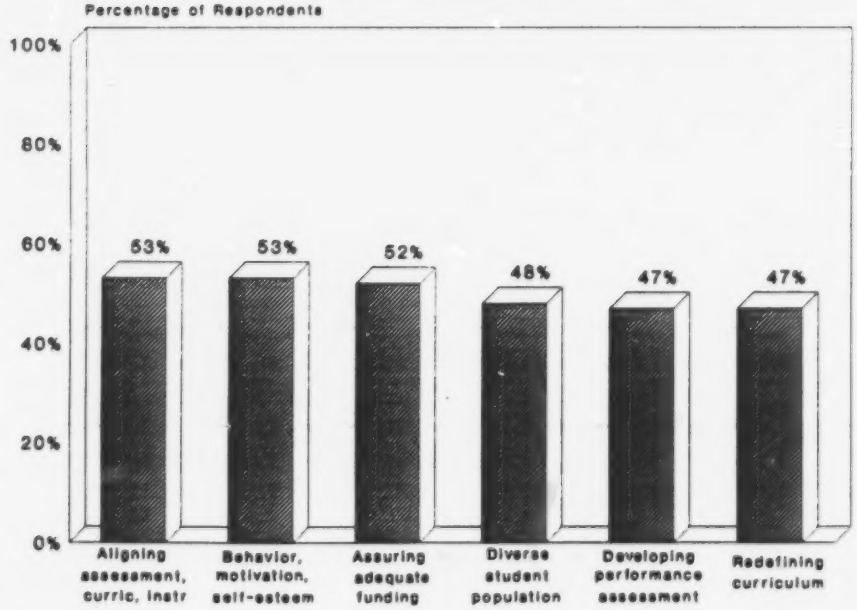


Figure 8

9. Evaluating program effectiveness (80 percent)

Issues having a *major* effect on at least 40 percent of principals (N = 134) were:

1. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (53 percent)
2. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem (53 percent)
3. Assuring adequate funding for education (52 percent)
4. Meeting the needs of diverse student populations (48 percent)
5. Developing student performance methods (47 percent)
6. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum (47 percent)
7. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education (46 percent)
8. Reorganizing/restructuring schooling (43 percent)
9. Applying technology in instruction, management, and policy-making (43 percent)
10. Enhancing school climate (42 percent)
11. Motivating and improving staff morale (41 percent)
12. Increasing parent and community involvement in meeting noneducational needs of children (40 percent)
13. Developing curriculum and instruction frameworks and standards in English/language arts (40 percent)

Issues affecting teachers. Figures 9 and 10 present issues of current concern to many teachers in the region. Issues affecting more than 80 percent of teachers (N = 180) were:

1. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem
2. Assuring adequate funding for education (84 percent)
3. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (82 percent)
4. Developing student performance assessment methods (82 percent)
5. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education (80 percent)

Issues Currently Affecting More than 80% of Teachers

(N = 180)

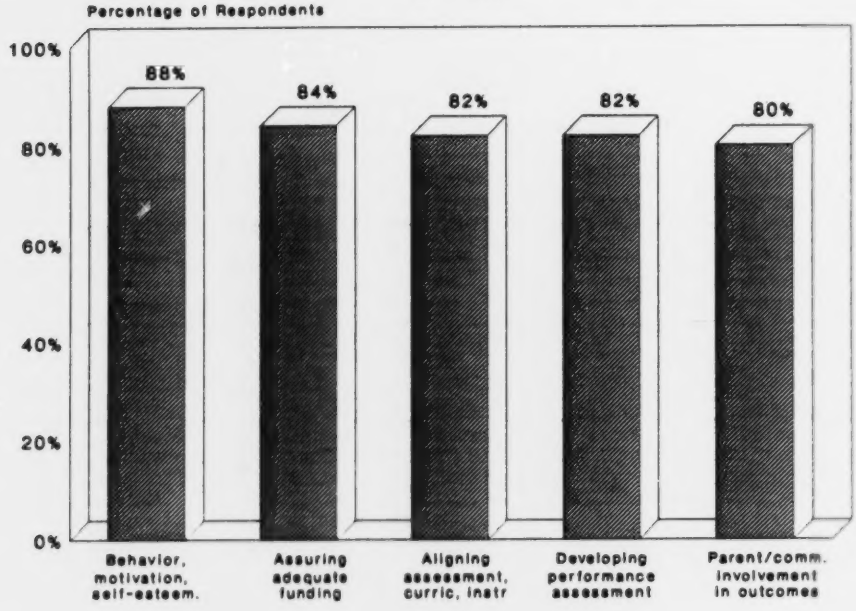


Figure 9

Issues Currently Having a Major Effect on at Least 40% of Teachers

(N = 180)

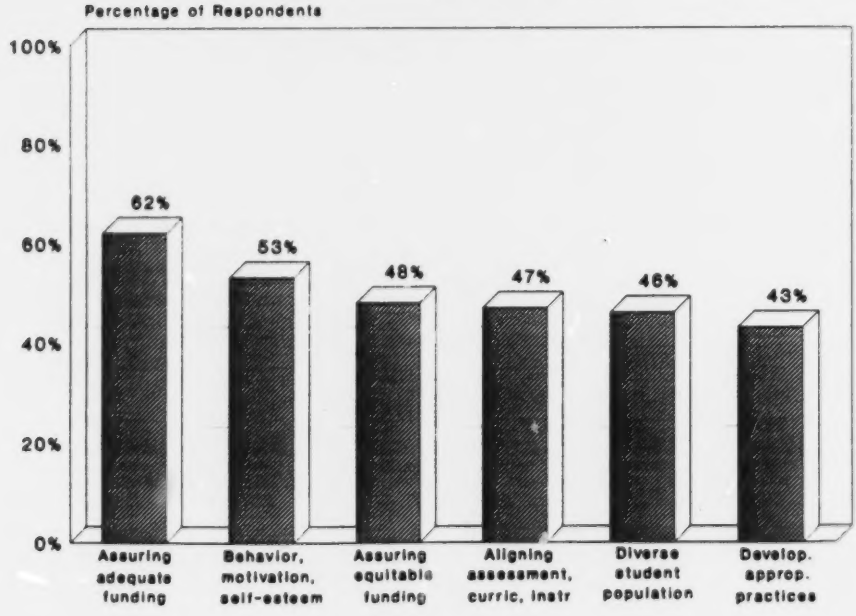


Figure 10

Issues having a *major* effect on at least 40 percent of teachers (N = 180) were:

1. Assuring adequate funding for education (62 percent)
2. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem (53 percent)
3. Assuring equitable school funding (48 percent)
4. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction (47 percent)
5. Meeting the needs of diverse student populations (46 percent)
6. Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices (43 percent)
7. Reorganizing/restructuring schooling (41 percent)
8. Motivating and improving staff morale (41 percent)
9. Increasing parent and community involvement in meeting noneducational needs of children (41 percent)
10. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education (41 percent)
11. Developing student performance assessment methods (40 percent)

Figure 11 summarizes the results of the issue version for the entire respondent group and then for superintendents, principals, and teachers separately. An "X" is marked for each issue that broadly affects more than 80 percent of a respondent group and/or has a *major* effect on at least 40 percent of a respondent group.

As the figure shows, five issues are currently having both a broad impact (affecting more than 80 percent of local educators) and a deep impact (having a major effect on at least 40 percent of local educators). These are:

1. Aligning assessment, curriculum, and instruction
2. Developing performance assessment methods
3. Assuring adequate funding for education
4. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem
5. Increasing parent/community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education

Other interesting LEA survey findings include:

- Reorganizing/restructuring schooling is having a major effect on at least 40 percent of every respondent group (teachers, principals, and superintendents).

Figure 11

Summary of the Effect of Current Issues

Current Issues	All Respondents		Superintendents		Principals		Teachers	
	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%
Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum	X		X	X	X	X		
Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices	X				X			X
Aligning assessment, curriculum, instruction	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Developing performance assessment methods	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Assuring equitable school funding		X		X				X
Assuring adequate funding for education	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Reorganizing/restructuring schooling		X		X		X		X
Evaluating program effectiveness			X		X			
Applying technology in instruction, management, and policy-making		X	X	X		X		
Exploring the impact of changing technology on schools and attitudes			X					

Figure 11 cont'd

Summary of the Effect of Current Issues

Current Issues	All Respondents		Superintendents		Principals		Teachers	
	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%	Affecting More Than 80%	Major Effect On At Least 40%
Meeting the needs of diverse student populations		X				X		X
Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation and self-esteem	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Enhancing school climate	X		X		X	X		
Increasing parent/community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Increasing parent/community involvement in meeting noneducational needs of children					X	X		X
Motivating and improving staff morale						X		X
Developing frameworks and standards in English/language arts						X		

- Redefining the content, scope, and structure of the curriculum is having a broad and deep impact on principals and superintendents but not on teachers.

3. School Board Objectives Survey

The survey of local school boards' objectives provides insight into service improvement and planning priorities at the district level. Figure 12 summarizes the major issue areas upon which the region's school boards are focusing their attention.

Issues related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and issues related to policy and management, are prominent among the school board objectives (25 percent and 21 percent of priorities, respectively). Other areas receiving attention by school boards are: meeting student needs (16 percent of priorities); family and community relations, including involvement, support, communication, and collaboration (15 percent); education profession (13 percent), school climate (6 percent); and technology (4 percent).

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The leading issue within this area is the review, revision, and improvement of curriculum, with an emphasis on defining outcomes and performance goals, integrating subjects and skills, preparing students for the 21st century and a global marketplace, and incorporating and meeting state standards and requirements. Several districts are moving towards a curriculum that is outcome-based, performance-based, or competency-based. Reviewing and revising student assessment methods to be more performance-based and authentic, and improving the use of standardized testing methods, are of concern to several school boards. Many districts are focusing on improving vocational and technical education, career education and counseling, the integration of work skills into the curriculum, and the expansion of learning opportunities and alternative education options.

A full range of subject areas are receiving attention, including math, science, reading, writing, social studies, and health. An emphasis on basic skills, life skills, and skills such as critical thinking, collaborative or cooperative learning skills, decision making, and problem solving, is being stressed by many districts. Improving instructional techniques and implementing research-based teaching strategies are priorities. Developmentally appropriate practices and the philosophy that "all students can learn" are stressed as ways to meet individual needs flexibly and effectively. Developing a desire for life-long learning in students is also being emphasized in school board objectives.

Policy and management. Within this issue area, strategic planning and long-range goal setting, assuring the adequacy and stability of financial resources, and expanding and updating facilities are priorities widely shared among school boards.

Strategic planning and long-range goal setting are priorities for many school districts, especially those involved in school improvement efforts. Several districts are broadening their goal-setting process to involve parents and community members. Some are adopting the National Goals as a basis for their improvement efforts; others are developing their own goals and defining quality indicators to measure their achievement of the goals.

Ensuring the adequacy, stability, and equity of school funding is also a top priority for many of the region's districts. Related priorities include identifying alternative funding sources, creatively using available resources, containing costs, working with and informing the legislature, and accessing community resources. Attention is being given to financial planning and efficient budgeting as well.

Current Issues Reflected in School Board Objectives

(N = 1,675)

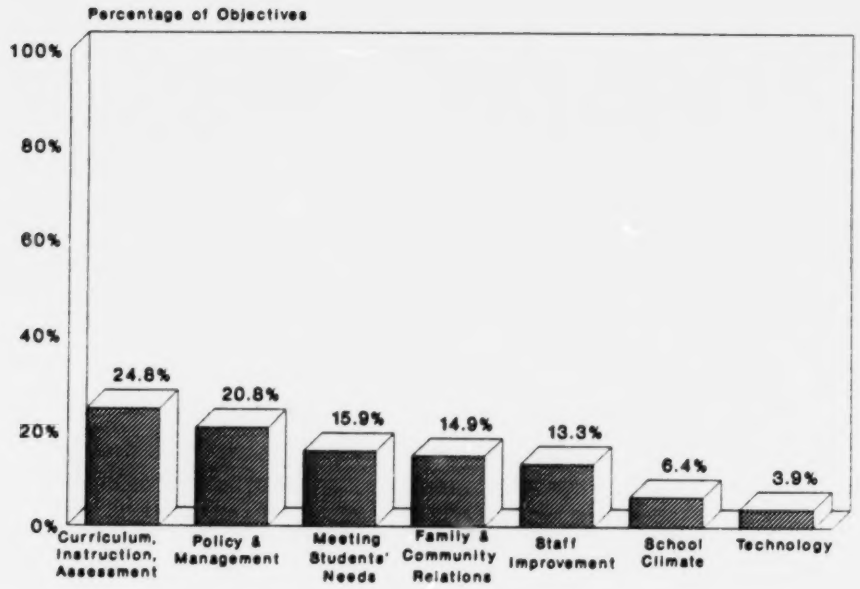


Figure 12

Many districts indicated that facilities expansion and updating is a priority. In this area, reducing class size, responding to enrollment growth, and improving cost-effectiveness are of concern. Several districts are working on a capital improvement plan, evaluating efficiency and facilities needs, and strengthening their maintenance operations. Extending facilities use to the community is being implemented by some districts as a way to improve efficiency as well as community relations.

Other policy and management priorities were related to policy and procedure development, strengthening school board efficiency, knowledge, and school involvement, implementing site-based decision making, and to a lesser extent, implementing site-based management. Establishing and enforcing consistent, fair behavior standards and discipline policies was a priority in several districts as well. Restructuring to optimize effectiveness and use of time, reorganizing to ensure administrative efficiency, and extending the school day or year to improve student learning, are priorities for some districts. Others are working to improve the coordination and collaboration between their elementary and secondary programs and across schools and districts. Efficient and effective management, program evaluation, accountability, and accreditation are other priorities cited by many school districts in the region.

Meeting students' needs. Improving student achievement, performance, and competence in both the academic and behavioral realms was by far the most widely shared school district priority related to meeting students' needs. Increasing the graduation rate, promoting self-esteem and motivation, improving behavior and discipline, and addressing the needs of students at-risk of school failure were also common priorities. Strengthening multicultural awareness, sensitivity, and respect among students, as well as ensuring equitable treatment of students, are important priorities for many districts. Several are concerned with increasing the number of graduates who go on to pursue a post-secondary education or who become employed out of high school.

To better meet student needs, many districts are focused on improving and increasing their counseling services and developing and improving various programs, such as those targeting at-risk students, talented and gifted students, and special needs students. Developing substance abuse prevention programs and addressing student health needs are also priorities for some districts. Extra-curricular activities are receiving a great deal of attention, particularly with regard to their availability and variety, student participation levels, efficiency, and appropriate balance with academic requirements.

Family and community relations. Improving communication with parents and the community was one of the most widely shared priorities across all categories. There is great emphasis being placed on providing information to the community about school improvement efforts and student achievement, receiving feedback from the community, and increasing community support of schools. Other common priorities stressed increasing parent and community involvement through participation in planning and decision making processes, volunteering in the classroom and at school events, and articulating desired student outcomes. Building collaborative relationships and partnerships with businesses and community service providers is a priority for many school districts, as is planning and implementing early childhood education programs and developing community service programs for students. Expanding the school's role in providing parent and adult education opportunities was reflected in school board objectives as well.

Education profession. Top priorities in this area were staff development and training; staff recruitment and hiring; teacher evaluation and supervision; teamwork and collaboration; establishing high performance standards; and strengthening administrative

support and leadership. With respect to staff development, planning and evaluating the effectiveness of training opportunities were common emphases. Revising hiring procedures, recruiting a diverse staff, retaining highly qualified staff, and ensuring adequate numbers of staff were priorities for many districts. Issues related to evaluation and supervision reflected a focus on improved practices, self-evaluation, and monitoring procedures. Establishing high standards shared by all staff, improving motivation and morale, increasing instructional effectiveness, improving administrative efficiency, and strengthening administrative support and leadership for innovation were also priorities.

School climate. Issues related to enhancing school climate were priorities for a substantial number of school districts. Recognizing excellence and achievement among students, staff, and the community was a common priority, as was improving internal communication and relations, providing a safe, healthy, environment, and promoting school spirit, unity, and sense of community. Raising expectations for success among students and staff was also a priority for many.

Technology. Increasing and improving the use of technology is a focus for several school districts. Being emphasized are: planning, expanding options, integrating technology into curriculum and instruction, distance learning, telecommunications, evaluating effectiveness, and identifying resources.

4. Needs Clarification Requests for Assistance

During 1992, NWREL staff documented 148 unsolicited requests for assistance or information from educators and others in the region who are working to improve education. NWREL, of course, provides extensive services beyond response to these unsolicited requests, but those services tend to be targeted explicitly to specific need areas as part of particular work scopes. The set of needs clarification requests in this discussion is completely initiated by field agencies as they address immediate problems.

Needs clarification requests reflect immediate and pressing concerns and needs for R&D assistance at the local, intermediate, and state levels. Figure 13 shows the issue areas into which this year's needs clarification requests fell. Note that, despite the highly specific nature of these requests from the field, some requests expressed issues in more than one area, with the total issues numbering 204. Key findings this year, and how they relate to previous years' findings, include the following:

- **School structure and governance**. Concern about school structure and governance has increased over the past four years. From 1989 to 1990, school improvement issues such as restructuring and site-based management doubled from 10 to 20 percent of the total number of issues cited in needs clarification requests (181 and 174, respectively), and then, in 1991, dropped slightly to just over 16 percent (of 233 cited issues). This year, the percentage of issues related to school structure and governance jumped to 31 percent (of 204 cited issues). Nongraded primaries and multiage classrooms have emerged as topics of concern or interest to many educators across the region. Needs assessment processes, strategic planning, vision and mission building, outcomes identification, and goal setting appear to be growing areas of concern or interest. School scheduling and year-round school calendars, general school improvement and reform, site-based management and decision making, facilities, and financial resources continue to be of concern or interest.

Current Issues Reflected in Needs Clarification Requests

(N = 204)

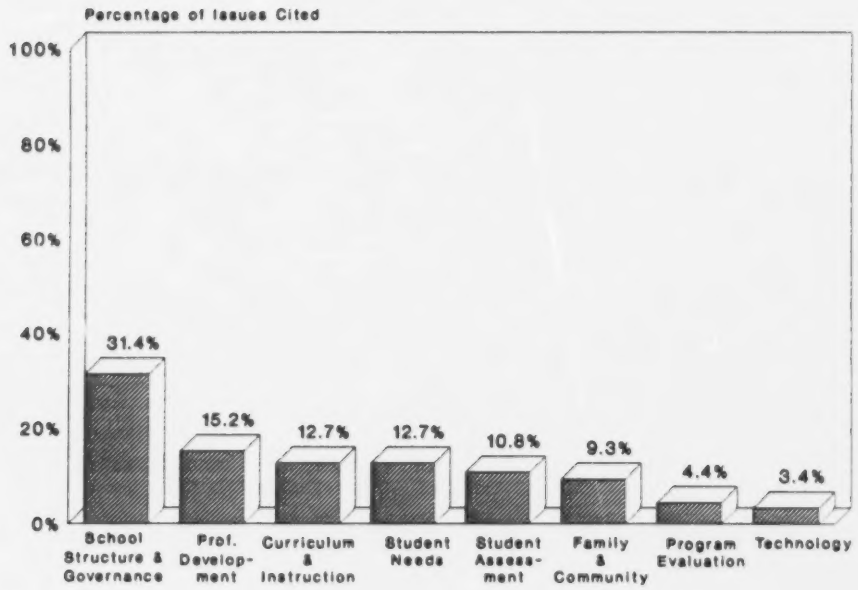


Figure 13

- **Professional development**. Over 15 percent of the issues cited in requests for assistance or information this year reflected professional development or staff-related concerns or interests. This is an increase from seven percent during the previous year, six percent during 1990, and 10 percent during 1989. Concern or interest in staff development in student assessment is increasing in the region. Professional development issues continue to include staff roles and responsibilities, staff motivation, and staff development strategies.

- **Curriculum and instruction.** Nearly 13 percent of this year's needs clarification issues were related to curriculum and instruction, including concern or interest about specific subject areas, curriculum integration, review and redesign of curriculum, restructuring vocational education, effective school and classroom activities, and appropriate instructional practices for young children; at-risk youth, students of different cultures, and students with disabilities. During previous years, curriculum and instruction accounted for higher percentages of issues expressed in requests for assistance or information: 31 percent in 1991, 26 percent in 1990, and 20 percent in 1989. Career education and workforce skills, integrated curriculum, applied academics, outcomes-based curriculum, renewal and planning, specific subject areas and instructional strategies, and computer-facilitated instruction were cited often in recent years. Assistance continues to be requested with regard to vocational education, curriculum integration, specific subject areas (math, science, language), and use of technology in instruction.

- **Student needs.** Nearly 13 percent of issues during this year expressed concern or interest about the special needs of students. In previous years, the percentages of issues addressing student needs were higher: 16 percent in 1991, 21 percent in 1990, and 15 percent in 1989. Across the years, a wide-range of issues have been included in this area, such as tracking and ability grouping, program development (gifted, dropout, tutoring, alternative schools), grade retention and skipping, student behavior and self-esteem, and understanding student needs. There appears to be a shift this year, however, from wanting to know more about the needs of students with different conditions and from different backgrounds, towards finding ways to meet the needs of those students. The need for staff development and training were mentioned frequently.

- **Student assessment.** Concerns or issues regarding student assessment accounted for nearly 11 percent of issues cited during 1992, up from seven percent in 1991 and eight percent in 1990 (the percentage in 1989 was not documented). Staff training in assessment and development of assessment alternatives were the most frequently cited issues during the past three years and concern or interest in these areas appears to be growing. Other concerns or interests included identifying assessment needs, revising grading practices and policies, and redesigning assessment systems. Concern and interest were expressed about assessment in early childhood education as well.

- **Family and community.** Concerns or issues regarding family and community support, collaboration and partnership building, and early childhood education accounted for over nine percent of the issues cited in 1992, a similar proportion to those in previous years (12 percent in 1991,

five percent in 1990, and eight percent in 1989). Family and community support issues reflected the previous years' focus on identifying successful models for facilitating and increasing parent and community involvement. Growing interest in strengthening business involvement and business roundtable action was expressed as well. Many of the issues cited in this area were related to collaboration and partnership-building, including identifying successful models and developing, funding, and evaluating collaborative efforts. An increasing percentage of needs clarification issues reflect concern or interest in early childhood education, including appropriate assessment, transition programs, developmentally appropriate practice, and program development.

- **Program evaluation.** Concern or interest about program evaluation remained about the same as last year, increasing only slightly from three percent of issues cited in 1991 to over four percent of issues cited in 1992. In earlier years, the proportion of requests addressing program evaluation was higher (nine percent in 1990 and the eight percent in 1989). Topics in this category varied in scope and level this year from state-wide assessment, to community-based evaluation approaches, to site-level evaluation of special programs or school improvement efforts. Interest in using data in monitoring progress toward program goals was expressed as well. Statewide assessment has emerged as a concern or interest, while site-level evaluation and monitoring have continued as issues during the past four years.

- **Technology.** Three percent of the issues expressed concern or interest in technology this year, while over six percent had in 1991. Concern and interest largely focused on instructional options, assessment of technology needs, and staff training. In previous years, technology issues had revolved primarily around use of technology in curriculum and instruction. This focus has expanded to include planning and needs assessment issues, as well as concerns regarding the impact of technological change and attitudes toward technology.

In sum, Northwest educators are increasingly seeking assistance in three areas: school structure and governance (many with regard to nongraded primaries), professional development (many with regard to student assessment), and student assessment (assessment alternatives and staff training). Concern or interest in early childhood education (including appropriate practices and assessment) appear to be growing as well. Help with curriculum and instruction, meeting student needs, program evaluation, technology, family and community support and involvement, and collaboration, remain common topics of concern or interest among educators in the region.

Strategic goals reflected in needs clarification requests. To support the NWREL Board of Directors' review of program policy, the needs clarification requests were also analyzed with respect to NWREL's Strategic Goals. Each request was assessed holistically (N = 148) and assigned to the Strategic Goal it most closely addressed. Key findings about the spread of needs clarification activities across the Strategic Goals include:

- **Improving the outcomes of schooling:** Forty-three percent of the requests address this goal. Such a large percentage is not surprising, as the majority of requests (69 percent) came from LEA staff, many of whom are involved in school improvement and restructuring activities. Issues cited

frequently included nongraded primary implementation, strategic planning, needs assessment, and scheduling options.

- **Strengthening capability to assess outcomes:** Nearly one in five requests for assistance targeted this goal. Help with staff training in assessment, program evaluation, and further development of assessment alternatives was requested by many.

- **Enhancing the education profession:** Assistance with enhancing the education profession accounted for 18 percent of the requests. Areas of need included planning and implementing staff development, defining staff roles and values, and improving staff relations.

- **Strengthening family and community support**: Improving parent involvement and developing school/business partnerships in support of children and schools comprised six percent of the requests for assistance.

- **Expanding capability to address school and public finance:** Needs for assistance in this area accounted for over five percent of the requests and included such issues as funding sources, cost-of-living increases, effects of school levy increases, and planning for facilities.

- **Responding to equity issues.** Nearly five percent of the requests addressed equity issues. Multicultural education, integrating special needs children in the classroom, gender differences in math and science, and implementing bilingual programs were among the issues cited.

- **Strengthening distressed schools and communities:** Almost three percent of the needs clarification activities requested assistance with issues related to distressed schools and communities, including violence prevention strategies, meeting the needs of at risk youth, and crisis management among minority students.

Needs clarification requests fall unevenly among the areas addressed by NWREL's Strategic Goals, with the majority of requests relating to areas which most directly affect local school staff: Improving the Outcomes of Schooling, Strengthening Capability to Assess Outcomes, and Enhancing the Education Profession.

5. PARS Client Follow-Up Surveys

Information on anticipated future areas of need is collected from NWREL clients at the conclusion of NWREL's service. Follow-up questionnaires generated through the Professional Activities Reporting System (PARS) offer clients an opportunity to cite issues they see affecting schools which they believe NWREL should address in the future. (See Appendix A for the survey instrument.) Responses to this survey thus constitute a second source of field-initiated needs information.

During 1992, 380 follow-up surveys were sent to clients throughout the region and 188 were returned (50 percent). Figure 14 shows the results of an analysis of the 177 issues cited among the responses. Findings included:

- **School improvement, structure, and governance**. Nearly 31 percent of the issues expressed by clients focused on school improvement, structure, and governance. Issues related to restructuring, implementing nongraded

Current Issues Reflected in PARS Client Follow-Up Surveys

(N = 177)

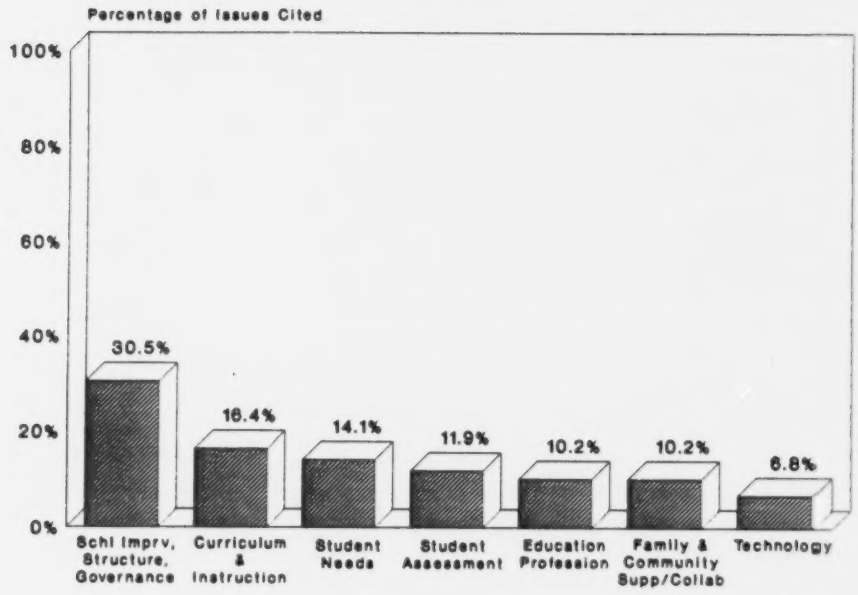


Figure 14

primaries, site-based management and decision-making, cost-cutting strategies, and program evaluation were most commonly cited. Overall, issues in this area have increased over the past few years, starting at 13 percent in 1989, declining to nine percent in 1990, but then jumping to 24 percent in 1991 and 31 percent in 1992.

- **Curriculum and instruction.** Issues related to curriculum and instruction constituted 16 percent of the future assistance needs noted by clients. Curriculum integration, vocational education, and applied academics were most commonly cited this year. Curriculum and instruction had been the most common need area in 1989, but has declined somewhat since then in proportion to other areas, namely student needs and school improvement, structure, and governance. Integration and reform issues have remained visible from year to year.

- **Student needs.** Fourteen percent of the issues cited by clients focused on meeting the needs of students. Improving practices and special programs for students with special needs, increasing multicultural awareness, and addressing student behavior problems were among the most commonly cited needs. In previous years, meeting the needs of at-risk students and addressing student behavior were the most common areas of need cited by clients (26 percent of needs cited in 1991 and 33 percent in 1990). Though the proportion is lower this year, it still reflects a high level of need in this area.

- **Student assessment.** Student assessment issues accounted for 12 percent of future needs expressed by clients. Most commonly cited issues included expanding assessment alternatives and linking assessment to curriculum and instruction. Between 1989 and 1991, student assessment issues had doubled from eight to 16 percent of clients' need statements. The development of assessment alternatives has consistently been cited.

- **Education profession.** Ten percent of the issues expressed by clients related to enhancing the education profession. A wide range of topics were cited, including effective staff development strategies, changing staff roles, teacher empowerment, and improved links with higher education. This year's proportion of issues addressing the education profession is up slightly from seven percent during 1991 and 1990. In 1989, it had been at 11 percent.

- **Other need areas.** Significant, and increased, percentages of clients noted future needs related to technology, family and community support, early childhood education, and collaboration:

  -- The effectiveness and impact of technology in the classroom and distance learning were prominent among the technology issues cited by clients. Strategic planning for technology was also noted.

  -- Family and community support issues focused primarily on increasing parent involvement, especially among minority parents.

  -- Developmentally appropriate practice and program development were emphasized in the area of early childhood education.

-- Issues related to collaboration focused on community-level efforts to coordinate education and human services so that families and children are served holistically.

Comparing the views of NWREL clients this year with those of clients in previous years, some shifts are discernible. The top three areas of future need expressed through clients' survey responses in 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992 focused on school improvement, structure, and governance, curriculum and instruction, and meeting student needs. However, these areas have changed in proportion to one another and other areas are showing increased or sustained need, including student assessment, enhancing the education profession, technology, family and community support, and collaboration.

Strategic goals reflected in PARS follow-up surveys. Client responses regarding future assistance needs have also been analyzed with respect to which Strategic Goal they address most closely (N = 145 responses). The results were:

- **Improving the outcomes of schooling:** Two out of five responses focused on issues addressed by this goal. Restructuring and reform, vocational education and job skills preparation, and curriculum integration were areas needing further attention.

- **Strengthening capability to assess outcomes:** Fifteen percent of client responses were related to this goal. Further assistance was requested with regard to expanding assessment alternatives and performance based assessment methods and implementing effective program evaluation.

- **Strengthening distressed schools and communities:** Nearly the same percentage (14 percent) of client responses focused on issues affecting distressed schools and communities, including distance education, violence and crime prevention, resource sharing, and school district consolidation.

- **Strengthening family and community support:** Twelve percent of responses reflected future assistance needs related to strengthening family and community support. Parent involvement, early childhood education, community-based schools, and collaboration were cited by clients.

- **Enhancing the education profession:** Issues targeted by this goal were cited in 11 percent of client responses, including staff development, team building, efficiency and productivity, and changing staff roles.

- **Responding to equity issues:** Nearly five percent of the responses addressed equity issues. Multicultural education and awareness and inclusion of special needs students in the classroom were among the issues cited.

- **Expanding capability to address school and public finance:** Issues targeted by this goal were cited by three percent of the clients who responded. Issues included accomplishing more with less, identifying cost-cutting measures, and developing funding support to ensure quality.

As with the needs clarification requests, the largest proportion of PARS client follow-up survey responses cited issues related to Improving the Outcomes of Schooling. However, the nature of issues cited in this area is slightly different than those indicated in needs clarification requests; they focus more on vocational education and the integration of job

skills than on school restructuring issues such as the implementation of nongraded primaries. Further, PARS client follow-up survey responses fall more evenly among the other areas addressed by NWREL's Strategic Goals.

6. Advisory Group Meetings

NWREL convenes advisory groups to address each of the Strategic Goals as well as other key issue areas or constituencies. Each year, committee members are requested to provide insight into current issues facing educators in the region which are related to the Strategic Goals. During the period of this report, the advisory groups were convened in the following areas: (1) Improving the Outcomes of Schooling and Enhancing the Education Profession (joint meeting); (2) Enhancing Equitable Treatment of Students and Healthy Schools and Communities (joint meeting); (3) Strengthening Family and Community Support for Children and Schools; and (4) Strengthening Capability to Assess Outcomes. In addition to these committees, needs information also was solicited during 1992 from groups in: (5) Indian education; and (6) rural education.

General needs. When three or more groups cite the same area as a key assistance need, it is considered a general need--a priority for a variety of constituent groups and in a range of programmatic areas. The general assistance needs derived from analysis of the 1992 advisory group meetings included the following:

- Focus on outcomes
- Community-initiated planning and improvement
- Multicultural pluralism and equity
- Resource coordination and allocation
- Meeting the needs of at-risk students, with emphasis on children in rural communities
- Collaborations in support of schooling including parent, family, and community support

Specific needs. A number of areas for NWREL assistance were cited by at least two groups. These are considered important to specific client populations or to specific programmatic areas. The specific areas of needs derived from an analysis of the 1992 advisory group meetings included:

- Change processes, systemic change, restructuring
- Increased access to data for policy support
- Early childhood education
- Further development of the education profession

Advisory group discussions were analyzed to compare general and specific needs over a four-year period (1989-1992). As shown in Table 9, four common general assistance areas were requested by NWREL advisory groups across the last four years. These areas of need were family and community support, establishing outcomes, at-risk students, and funding. During 1992, a new general area of need was expressed: multicultural pluralism

Table 9

Comparison of General Needs Expressed by Advisory Groups

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Staff develop, retention, & recruitment	X	X	X	
Family & community support	X	X	X	X
Preservice training aligned with practice	X		X	
Establishing outcomes	X	X	X	X
At-risk students	X	X	X	X
Developing collaborations	X			X
Building-based management	X			
Program evaluation	X			
Defining the role of the school	X			
Early childhood education and care	X			
Funding	X		X	X
Curriculum and instruction		X		
State-level policy			X	
Multicultural pluralism; equity				X

and equity. Other general areas discussed during advisory group meetings in previous years, including teacher development, retention, and recruitment, did not appear this year.

In terms of specific needs, no areas of need are constant over the four-year period (see Table 10). However, restructuring schools was expressed as a specific need for the third year in a row, early childhood education was discussed for the second year in a row, and better use of data appeared for the second time within the four year period. A new area of specific need emerged this year: further development of the education profession.

The fact that both general and specific areas of need cross cut each other and overlap from year to year lends support to the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of NWREL's set of Strategic Goals. NWREL's Strategic Goals appear to be adequately reflecting the concerns, both general and specific, of the various constituencies and interest groups that make up NWREL's advisory groups.

Table 10

Comparison of Specific Needs Expressed by Advisory Groups

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Strategic planning	X	X	X	
Multicultural education	X			
Science education	X			
Technology including distance learning	X	X		
Vocational education	X			
Meeting diverse needs of students and communities	X			
Rural schools	X			
Student assessment	X	X	X	
Drug and alcohol abuse prevention	X	X		
Better use of data		X		X
Restructuring schools		X	X	X
Effective practices		X		
Recruitment and retention of minority staff		X		
National standards		X		
Early childhood education		X		X
Professional development				X

B. EMERGING ISSUES IN THE REGION

NWREL's Board of Directors, advisory groups, and staff widely recognize that the societal context and demands on education in the region have been shifting in recent years and are likely to continue shifting as the 21st century approaches. To fulfill its institutional leadership function (see NWREL's mission statement in the second chapter), it is important that NWREL anticipates and addresses these changes. Thus, the regional needs assessment has sought to identify not only immediate concerns and interests of educators in the region, but also longer term, emerging issues that may constitute trends with which NWREL's constituents may have to contend. In this section, findings related to major emerging issues are reported from two different data sources: the LEA survey and the advisory group survey.

1. LEA Survey: Major Emerging Issues

Half of the respondents to the LEA survey were asked to assess a set of emerging issues or trends that had previously been identified by NWREL. The survey instrument was developed based on a set of emerging issues which had been identified from a close examination of: (1) major statements and policy actions during the previous year from national associations, agencies, and groups such as American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Committee for Economic Development (CED), Congress, Education Commission of the States (ECS), National Business Roundtable, National Commission on Children, National Education Goals Panel, National Governors' Association (NGA), National Head Start Association, National School Boards Association (NSBA), Sandia Laboratory, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; (2) major NWREL work in the previous year; and (3) major statements and policy actions within the previous year from regional associations, agencies, and groups such as state departments of education, the Washington Governor's Council for Educational Reform and Funding, the Idaho Education Project, and the state legislatures.

Descriptive statements of the 12 emerging issues revealed through review of major NWREL research and policy topics and through review of major national and regional policy statements and actions were prepared. These 12 emerging issue statements are:

1. **Current State of Education:** A shifting tone is evident in recent reports and statements by policy leaders about the current crisis state of education. Rather than viewing our current education system as an entire failure, *both educators and noneducators are increasingly acknowledging some successes while identifying some specific persistent problems and challenges.*

2. **Systemic Change:** *A consensus is emerging that systemic change is needed to meet effectively the challenges of the future.* "Fix the parts" and "fix the people" approaches to change must give way to integrated approaches which concentrate on "fixing the system."

3. **Integration of Education and Human Services:** Increasingly, schools alone cannot address the problems children are experiencing and bringing to school. Support is needed across the child's home, school, and community. As a response, *efforts are increasing to integrate education with human services for providing comprehensive support to children and families.*

4. **Teachers as Professionals:** *A view of teachers as professionals working from a well established knowledge base is replacing the view of teachers as semiskilled workers.* This is a driving force behind many reforms of schools and teacher preparation programs.

5. **Educational Choice:** Several states have formed education study commissions and proposed legislative initiatives. Educational choice is mentioned in almost every report, but there is no consensus on the issue. *Legislative efforts to encourage and support choice within the system are increasing.*

6. **Financing Schools:** Financing schools remains a high concern. While issues of adequacy and equity in funding persist, *attempts to tie resource allocation to reforms such as improved outcomes and site-based decision making are growing.*

7. **Early Childhood Education:** Recognizing that children and families need more support than ever, and acknowledging that early intervention practices are effective, *schools are increasingly entering into partnerships with early childhood programs.* Strengthening relationships between early childhood and early elementary programming will smooth transitions and improve children's chances for success in the public school system.

8. **Site-Based Decision Making:** Site-based efforts continue to be a central focus of school reform. Two alternative approaches have emerged--one emphasizes management and the other emphasizes school improvement issues. *The burgeoning overall interest is in improving student outcomes through decentralizing day-to-day administrative and instructional decisions to where the work of schooling is done--at the school site.*

9. **Student Assessment:** Schools are seeking new ways to assess students to achieve better accountability and connection to actual student performance outcomes. *New student performance assessment methods are emerging,* including systems of assessment designed to measure student outcomes based on portfolios of student work. Many of the new methods are being named "authentic" because they attempt to align the assessment of children's behaviors and skills closely with classroom instructional methods.

10. **Business Involvement:** Business is increasingly involved in efforts to improve education, with *a discernible shift toward proactive leadership in defining what needs to be done to improve the system of education.* State-level studies and commissions, as well as agendas for change articulated and monitored by major groups, have been the hallmark of this emerging issue.

11. **Science and Math:** *The improvement of science and math education is increasingly seen as critical to the future success of students.* The need for greater understanding and innovation is seen at all levels: (1) designing alternative forms of classroom assessment of science and math learning; (2) understanding the interplay between local needs and the articulation of state and national priorities; and (3) gaining deeper understanding about the science and math educational system.

12. **Deregulation:** Many educational reforms are pressing for deregulating education. *There is a growing concern that federal and state regulations tend to overly limit essential professional flexibility* needed by the building administrators and teachers who deal directly with students, families, and the community.

Local educators were asked to indicate: (1) the extent to which each emerging issue is increasingly affecting their work; and (2) the specific assistance they would like most in addressing each emerging issue. (A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix C.) Overall, 1,844 superintendents, principals, and teachers received the emerging issue version of the survey and 20 percent responded. Responses to the first survey question, regarding the extent to which the emerging issues are affecting local educators' work, are described for each emerging issue separately and then summarized in a set of graphs and a matrix at the conclusion of this section. Responses to the second question, regarding assistance needs, are summarized in the final section of this chapter.

Emerging issue 1: Current State of Education. A shifting tone is evident in recent reports and statements by policy leaders about the current crisis state of education. Rather than viewing our current education system as an entire failure, *both educators and noneducators are increasingly acknowledging some successes while identifying some specific persistent problems and challenges.*

- **Superintendents:** Seventy-seven percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Seventy-six percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Sixty-four percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- These percentages fell into the middle of each group's range of percentages reporting that emerging issues are increasingly affecting their work. Among their respective group's responses to the 12 issues, the percentage of superintendents was 6th highest, the percentage of principals was 4th highest, and the percentage of teachers was 5th highest.

Emerging issue 2: Systemic Change. *A consensus is emerging that systemic change is needed to meet effectively the challenges of the future.* "Fix the parts" and "fix the people" approaches to change must give way to integrated approaches which concentrate on "fixing the system."

- **Superintendents:** Seventy-eight percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Eighty-two percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Seventy-four percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- While the percentage of superintendents reporting that this issue is increasingly affecting their work was 4th highest among the group's

responses, the percentages of principals and teachers were 2nd highest among their respective groups' responses.

Emerging issue 3: Integration of Education and Human Services. Increasingly, schools alone cannot address the problems children are experiencing and bringing to school. Support is needed across the child's home, school, and community. As a response, *efforts are increasing to integrate education with human services for providing comprehensive support to children and families.*

- **Superintendents:** Eighty-five percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Eighty-six percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Seventy-six percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- Of all 12 emerging issues, this issue had the highest percentages of superintendents, principals, and teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that the issue is increasingly affecting their work.

Emerging issue 4: Teachers as Professionals. *A view of teachers as professionals working from a well established knowledge base is replacing the view of teachers as semiskilled workers.* This is a driving force behind many reforms of schools and teacher preparation programs.

- **Superintendents:** Sixty-two percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Sixty-one percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Fifty-four percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- These percentages were relatively low among each groups' responses. Within each group's responses to the 12 emerging issues, the percentage of superintendents was 9th highest, the percentage of principals was 8th highest, and the percentage of teachers was 9th highest.

Emerging issue 5: Educational Choice. Several states have formed education study commissions and proposed legislative initiatives. Educational choice is mentioned in almost every report, but there is no consensus on the issue. *Legislative efforts to encourage and support choice within the system are increasing.*

- **Superintendents:** Forty-nine percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Fifty-three percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Thirty-four percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- Of all 12 emerging issues, this ssue had the lowest percentages of local educators agreeing or strongly agreeing that the issue is increasingly affecting their work.

Emerging Issue 6: Financing Schools. Financing schools remains a high concern. While issues of adequacy and equity in funding persist, *attempts to tie resource allocation to reforms such as improved outcomes and site-based decision making are growing.*

- **Superintendents:** Eighty percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Seventy percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Fifty-seven percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- While the percentages of principals and teachers reporting that this issue is increasingly affecting their work were relatively low (7th out of 12) among their groups' responses, the percentage of superintendents reporting this was 2nd highest among their group's responses.

Emerging issue 7: Early Childhood Education. Recognizing that children and families need more support than ever, and acknowledging that early intervention practices are effective, *schools are increasingly entering into partnerships with early childhood programs.* Strengthening relationships between early childhood and early elementary programming will smooth transitions and improve children's chances for success in the public school system.

- **Superintendents:** Seventy-nine percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Seventy-four percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Fifty-six percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- The percentage of superintendents indicating that this issue is increasingly affecting their work was 3rd highest among their responses to the 12 emerging issues. The percentages of principals and teachers reporting this were relatively lower, 5th and 8th, respectively, among their groups' responses.

Emerging issue 8: Site-Based Decision Making. Site-based efforts continue to be a central focus of school reform. Two alternative approaches have emerged--one emphasizes management and the other emphasizes school improvement issues. *The burgeoning overall interest is in improving student outcomes through decentralizing day-to-day administrative and instructional decisions to where the work of schooling is done --at the school site.*

- **Superintendents:** Seventy percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- **Principals:** Seventy-nine percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- **Teachers:** Sixty-three percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- While the percentages of superintendents and teachers reporting that this issue is increasingly affecting their work were relatively low (8th and 6th, respectively) among their groups' responses to the 12 emerging issues, the percentage of principals reporting this was 3rd highest among their group's responses.

Emerging issue 9: Student Assessment. Schools are seeking new ways to assess students to achieve better accountability and connection to actual student performance outcomes. *New student performance assessment methods are emerging*, including systems of assessment designed to measure student outcomes based on portfolios of student work. Many of the new methods are being named "authentic" because they attempt to align the assessment of children's behaviors and skills closely with classroom instructional methods.

- **Superintendents:** Seventy-six percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- **Principals:** Seventy-four percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- **Teachers:** Sixty-six percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- These percentages are in the middle of the range of percentages of each group indicating that issues are increasingly affecting their work. Among 12 emerging issues, the percentage of superintendents was 7th highest, the percentage of principals was 5th highest, and the percentage of teachers was 4th highest.

Emerging issue 10: Business Involvement. Business is increasingly involved in efforts to improve education, with *a discernible shift toward proactive leadership in defining what needs to be done to improve the system of education.* State-level studies and commissions, as well as agendas for change articulated and monitored by major groups, have been the hallmark of this issue.

- **Superintendents:** Fifty-eight percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- **Principals:** Fifty-eight percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- **Teachers:** Forty-eight percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.

- These percentages were relatively low among each groups' responses. Within each group's responses to the 12 issues, the percentages of

superintendents and teachers were 10th highest and the percentage of principals was 9th highest.

Emerging issue 11: Science and Math. *The improvement of science and math education is increasingly seen as critical to the future success of students.* The need for greater understanding and innovation is seen at all levels: (1) designing alternative forms of classroom assessment of science and math learning; (2) understanding the interplay between local needs and the articulation of state and national priorities; and (3) gaining deeper understanding about the science and math educational system.

- **Superintendents:** Seventy-seven percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Seventy-one percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Seventy-two percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- While the percentages of superintendents and principals reporting that this issue is increasingly affecting their work were relatively low (5th and 6th, respectively) among their groups' responses to the 12 issues, the percentage of teachers reporting this was 3rd highest among their group's responses.

Emerging issue 12: Deregulation. Many educational reforms are pressing for deregulating education. *There is a growing concern that federal and state regulations tend to overly limit essential professional flexibility* needed by the building administrators and teachers who deal directly with students, families, and the community.

- **Superintendents:** Seventy-eight percent of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Principals:** Fifty-seven percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- **Teachers:** Fifty-six percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this issue is increasingly affecting their work.
- Where these percentages lie relative to those for the other 11 issues varies widely among the three respondent groups. The percentage of superintendents was 4th highest, while the percentages of principals and teachers were 10th and 8th highest, respectively, among the 12 emerging issues.

Figures 15 through 22 display these findings by respondent group. Figure 23 summarizes the results of the emerging issue version for the entire respondent group and then for superintendents, principals, and teachers separately. In that figure, an "X" is marked for each emerging issue that broadly affects more than 75 percent of a respondent group (i.e., more than 75 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the issue is increasingly affecting their work) and/or has a *major* effect on at least 35 percent of a respondent group (i.e., at least 35 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the issue is increasingly affecting their work).

Emerging Issues Increasingly Affecting a Large Majority of Local Educators

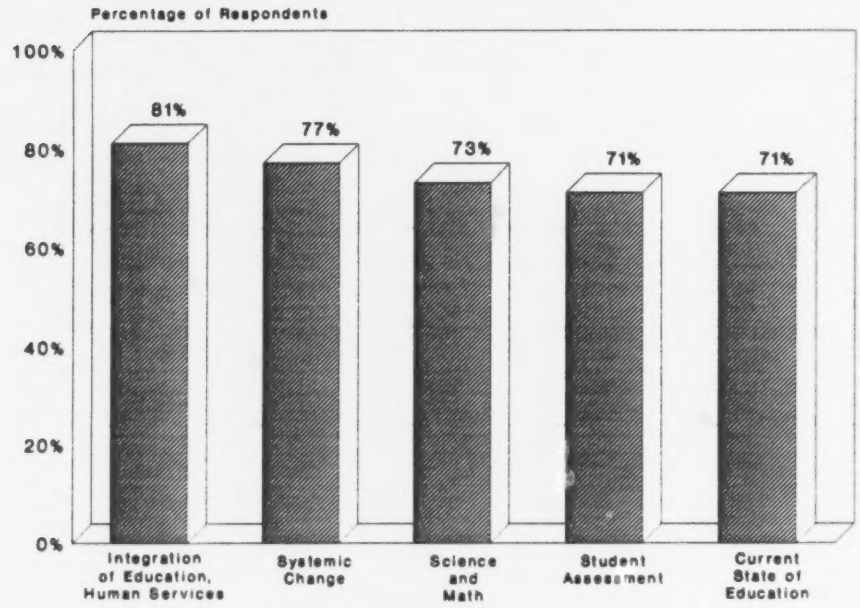


Figure 15

Emerging Issues Increasingly Having a Major Effect on Local Educators

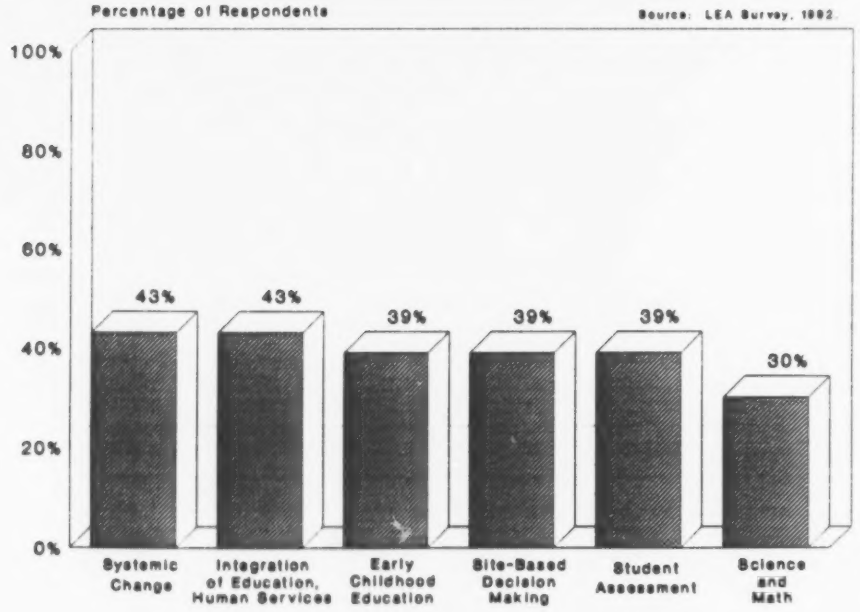


Figure 16

Emerging Issues Increasingly Affecting a Large Majority of Superintendents

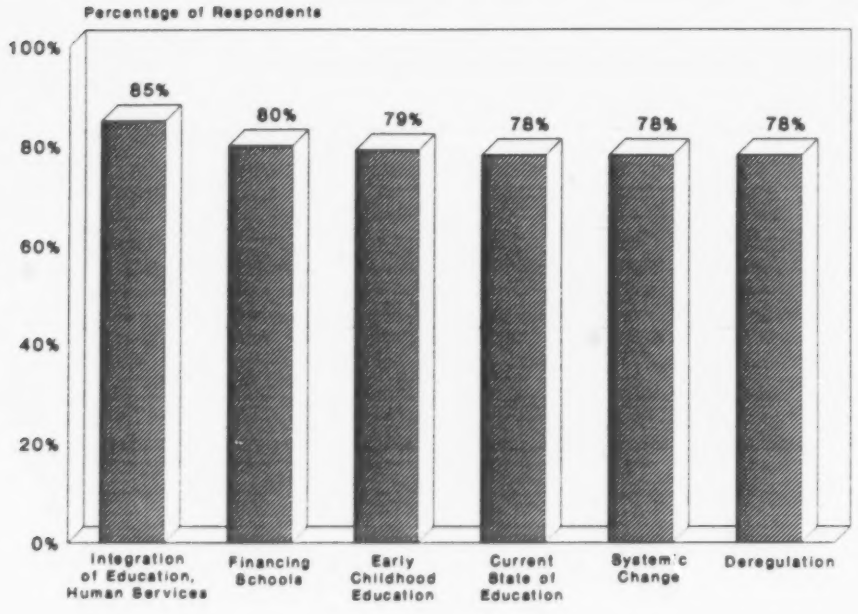


Figure 17

Emerging Issues Increasingly Having a Major Effect on Superintendents

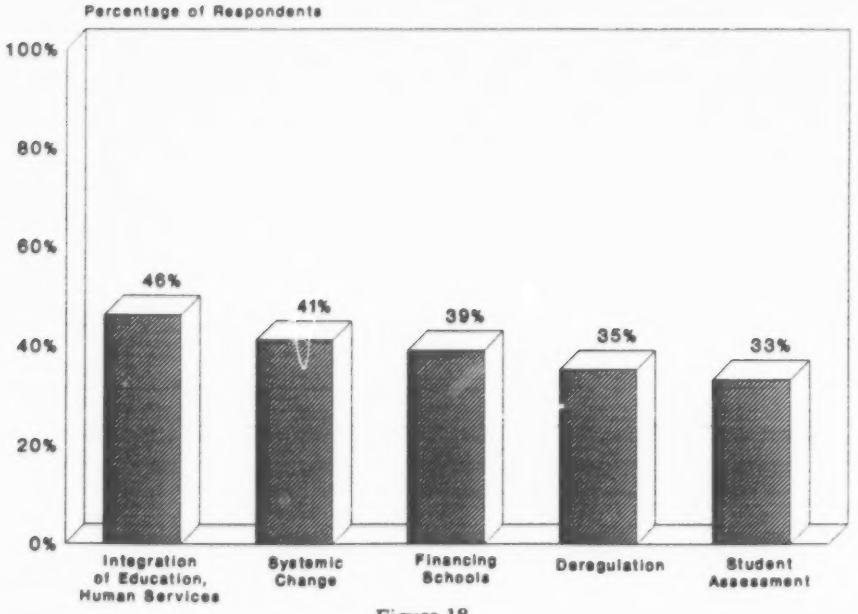


Figure 18

Emerging Issues Increasingly Affecting a Large Majority of Principals

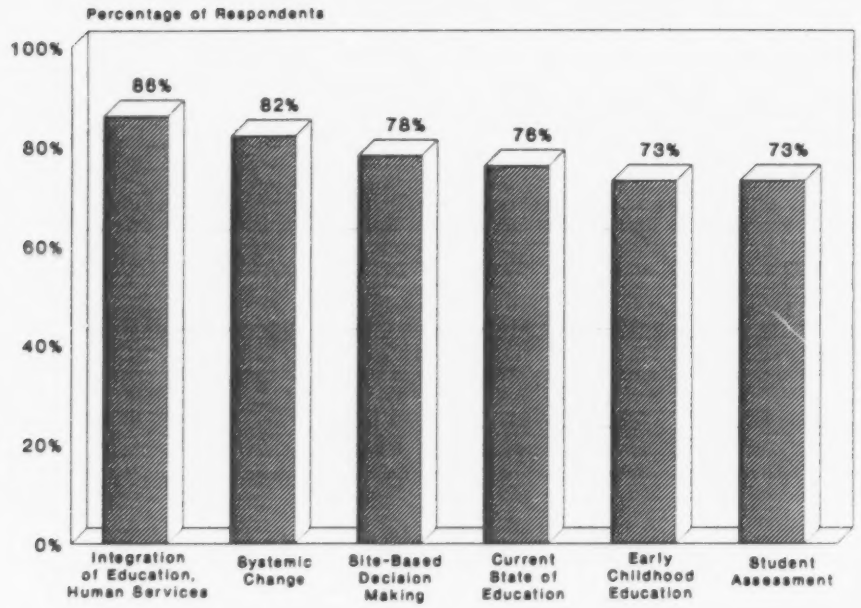


Figure 19

Emerging Issues Increasingly Having a Major Effect on Principals

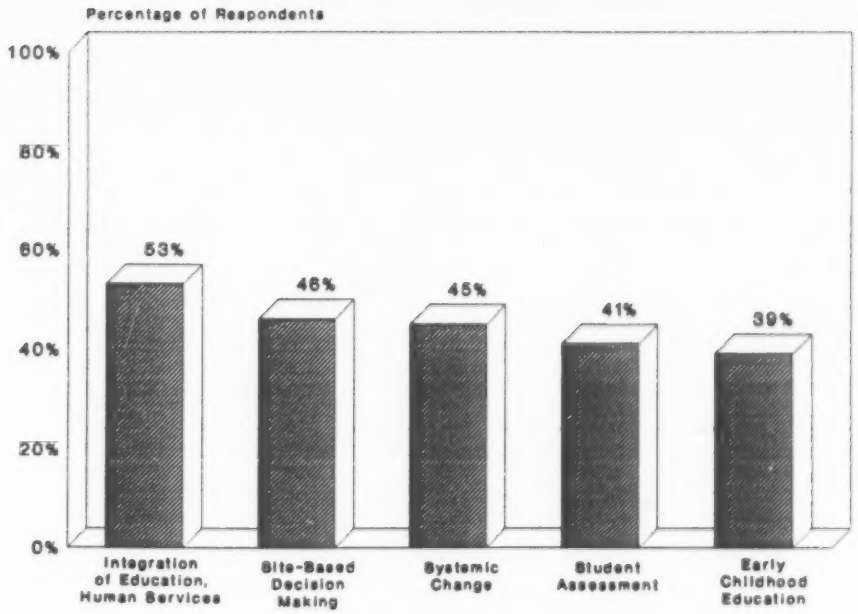


Figure 20

Emerging Issues Increasingly Affecting a Large Majority of Teachers

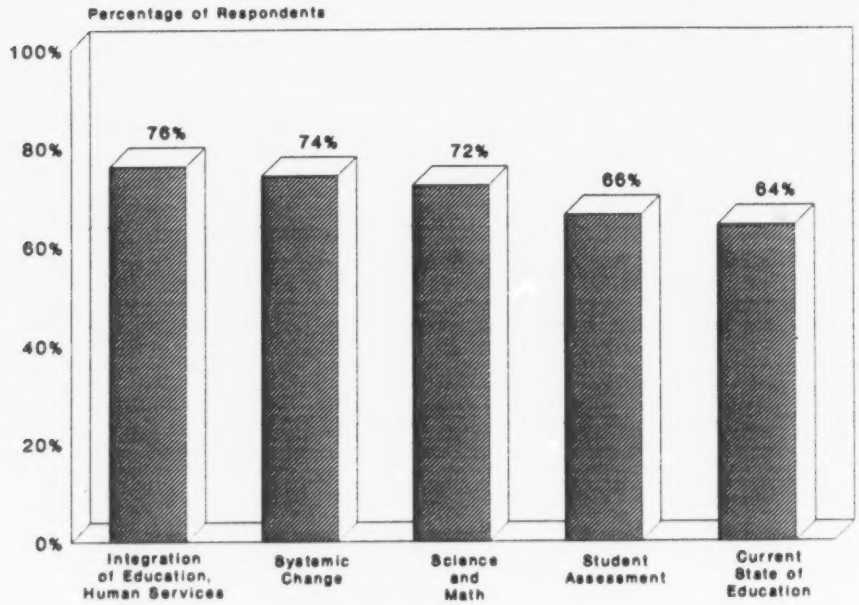


Figure 21

Emerging Issues Increasingly Having a Major Effect on Teachers

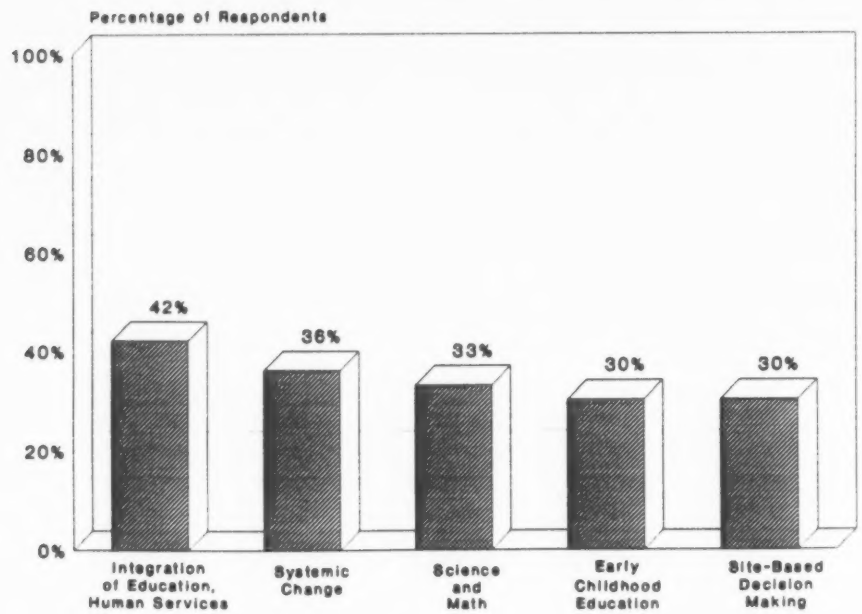


Figure 22

Figure 23

Summary of the Effect of Major Emerging Issues

Major Emerging Issues	All Respondents		Superintendents		Principals		Teachers	
	Affecting More Than 75%	Major Effect On At Least 35%	Affecting More Than 75%	Major Effect On At Least 35%	Affecting More Than 75%	Major Effect On At Least 35%	Affecting More Than 75%	Major Effect On At Least 35%
1. Current State of Education			X		X			
2. Systemic Change	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
3. Integration of Education and Human Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Teachers as Professionals								
5. Educational Choice								
6. Financing Schools			X	X				
7. Early Childhood Education			X			X		
8. Site-Based Decision Making					X	X		
9. Student Assessment			X			X		
10. Business Involvement								
11. Science and Math			X					
12. Deregulation			X	X				

As the matrix shows, two emerging issues are having both a broad impact (affecting more than 75 percent of local educators) and a deep impact (having a major effect on at least 35 percent of local educators). These are **Systemic Change** and **Integration of Education and Human Services.** Superintendents indicated that **Financing Schools** and **Deregulation** are having both a broad and deep impact at the district level, while principals indicated that **Site-Based Decision Making** is having both a broad and deep impact at the building level. **Current State of Education** is having a broad impact on superintendents and principals, but not teachers.

Additional emerging issues identified by respondents. Additional issues affecting superintendents, principals, and teachers included:

- **Superintendents:** increasing need for staff development and administrator support as education changes; increasing need to measure success and improve accountability; changing roles for staff (for administrators, in light of site-based management, for teachers, with respect to increasing needs of students, for school boards, with regard to reform efforts); increasing community involvement and pressure; declining student performance; declining resources; growing diversity in student population; increasing pressure from special interest groups; and increasing need for state legislative support for site-based reform

- **Principals:** more at-risk students; increasing racial issues and tensions/increasing need for cultural sensitivity and improved race relations among students and staff; increasing behavior problems, violence and criminal activity in schools; difficulty in defining schools' role in meeting the needs of children and youth; increasing need for staff development and resources for training and support; increasing special education services; increased and more complex services are needed for students; fewer people are becoming educators (administrators and teachers); developmentally appropriate practices (curriculum and instruction); non-graded primaries; increasing need for improving staff preparation; and growing need for better communication between schools, families, and communities

- **Teachers:** declining discipline, sense of responsibility, and respect among students; increasing expectations and demands that schools can and will meet all the needs of students; increasing expectation to do more with less (less time and fewer resources); inclusion and mainstreaming of special needs students; increasing use and integration of technology; increased involvement of parents and pressure by parents in programming and policy making; steady decline of student performance and steady increase in on-the-job stress

2. Advisory Group Survey

NWREL has formed an advisory group of expert practitioners and policy makers to address program policy and programmatic work towards each of the seven Strategic Goals, as well as other key work areas. Members of these advisory groups were surveyed to solicit their perspective on the impact of 12 emerging issues (described above) and to obtain more specific information regarding the types of R&D assistance NWREL could provide in addressing these issues. (See a copy of the survey instrument in Appendix D.) Of the 105 members surveyed, nearly 50 percent responded. Advisory group members' responses regarding the impact of the emerging issues are described here; their views regarding R&D assistance needs are reported in the next, and final, section of this chapter.

As Figure 24 and 25 show, emerging issues that are having both a broad impact (affecting more than 75 percent of advisory group members) and a deep impact (having a major effect on at least 35 percent of advisory group members) are:

- **Integration of Education and Human Services** (affecting 88 percent overall and having a major effect on 60 percent)
- **Systemic Change** (affecting 88 percent overall and having a major effect on 44 percent)
- **Early Childhood Education** (affecting 79 percent overall and having a major effect on 40 percent)

Emerging issues having a relatively broad impact (affecting more than 75 percent of advisory group members) are:

- **Current State of Education** (affecting 85 percent overall and having a major effect on 29 percent)
- **Site-Based Decision Making** (affecting 77 percent overall and having a major effect on 25 percent)

Emerging issues having a relatively deep impact (having a major effect on at least 35 percent of advisory group members) are:

- **Financing Schools** (having a major effect on 42 percent and affecting 73 percent overall)
- **Student Assessment** (having a major effect on 40 percent and affecting 73 percent overall)

Emerging issues having some regional impact, but not as broad or deep on advisory group members as those discussed above, are:

- **Teachers as Professionals** (affecting 69 percent overall and having a major effect on 31 percent)
- **Educational Choice** (affecting 40 percent overall and having a major effect on 10 percent)
- **Business Involvement** (affecting 63 percent overall and having a major effect on 21 percent)
- **Science and Math** (affecting 60 percent overall and having a major effect on 21 percent)
- **Deregulation** (affecting 60 percent overall and having a major effect on 27 percent)

Advisory group members' responses to the emerging issues are quite similar to local educators' responses. **Systemic Change** and **Integration of Education and Human Services** were rated by both groups as having a broad and deep impact across the region.

Emerging Issues Increasingly Affecting a Large Majority of Advisory Group Members

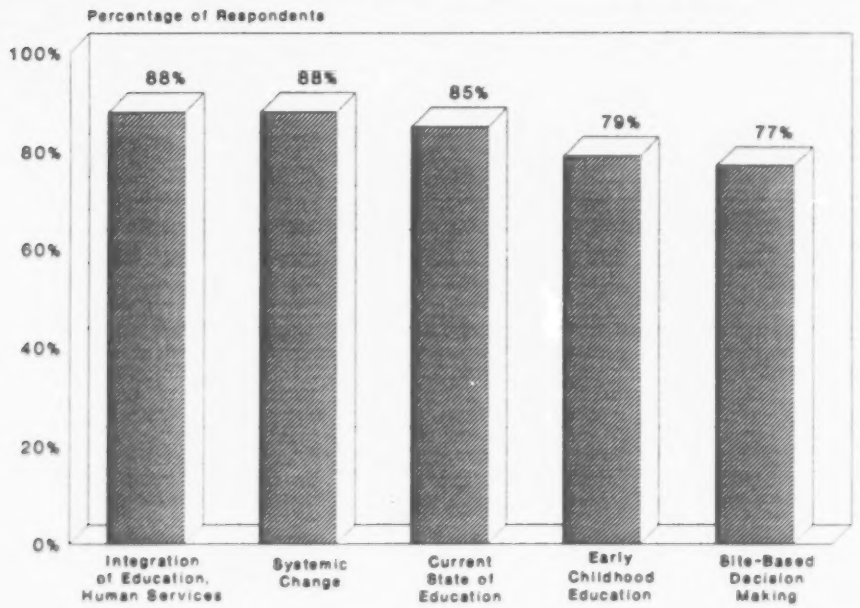


Figure 24

Emerging Issues Increasingly Having a Major Effect on Advisory Group Members

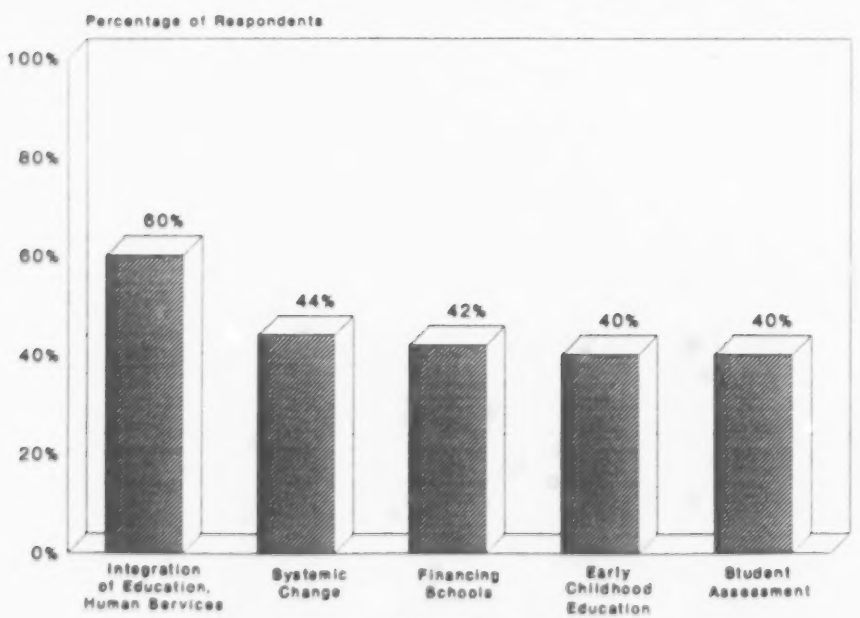


Figure 25

Additional issues identified by advisory group members included: the growing diversity of school and community populations; an increasing emphasis on and need for multicultural and global education; the increasing application of technology and communications; and the increasing complexity and challenge in the learning and teaching environment.

C. R&D ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Research and development services are an institutional function of NWREL. Regional educational laboratories have an array of strategies they employ to address the needs for educational improvement, depending on the issue. NWREL's experience of over 25 years within the Northwest region has demonstrated that a mix of R&D strategies is most desirable and responsive to its clients.

NWREL has traditionally described its R&D services in four general categories: research, development, dissemination, and service (RDDS). The activities conducted under these four major categories can be defined as follows:

- Research
  - -- Create knowledge
  - -- Create/generate data
- Development
  - -- Synthesize knowledge/data
  - -- Apply knowledge/data
- Dissemination
  - -- Information services
  - -- Networking/referral
  - -- Convening
- Service
  - -- Technical assistance
  - -- Training
  - -- Design/planning
  - -- Needs identification/assessment
  - -- Evaluation
  - -- Testing/assessment

In this section, three major data sources are drawn upon to develop an indication of how the current and emerging issues described earlier might best be addressed by NWREL through RDDS assistance. Data sources include needs clarification requests, the LEA survey, and the advisory group survey.

1. Needs Clarification Requests

NWREL receives field-initiated requests for assistance from practitioners throughout the region to help in clarifying needs and to develop plans to resolve problems they themselves have identified. Indications of the type of assistance requested in needs clarification activities offer insight into the mix of RDDS functions for which clients look to NWREL.

As reported earlier, needs clarification requests indicated that educators are increasingly seeking assistance in three areas: school structure and governance (many with regard to nongraded primaries), professional development (many with regard to student assessment), and student assessment (assessment alternatives and staff training). Concern or interest in early childhood education (appropriate practices and assessment) and program evaluation appear to be growing as well. Help with curriculum and instruction, meeting student needs, technology, family and community support and involvement, and collaboration, remain common topics of concern or interest among educators in the region.

The assistance educators most often sought from NWREL to address concerns and interests in these areas was research and information to help them weigh alternatives they were considering. Nearly two thirds of the needs clarification requests asked for this type of assistance, and more specifically for syntheses of knowledge or data and dissemination of information and research about effective practices. Nearly one third of the practitioners requested technical assistance and on-site assistance with planning and needs identification. Some practitioners requested training at NWREL and presentations by NWREL staff at conferences.

Since needs clarification requests deal with immediate problems of limited scope, it is not surprising that research services (creating knowledge and data) are not represented among the assistance needs. Development, dissemination, and service account for equal proportions of the needs clarification activities. Notably, these service activities were likely to lead to development of plans on the client's part for continued service from NWREL or other R&D assistance providers.

2. LEA Survey

All respondents to the LEA survey were asked to describe the types of assistance they could use in addressing their priority concerns (described earlier in this section). Analysis of local educators' priority concerns yielded seven general issue areas: curriculum and instruction; school structure, governance and finance; student needs; education profession; technology; family and community involvement and support; and student assessment. Assistance needs related to local educators' priority concerns are reported here for each respondent group within the general issue areas. Responses indicate that the full range of RDDS services are needed to address current and emerging priorities, with emphasis falling on one category or another depending upon the nature of the problem or need.

Curriculum and instruction

- **Teachers:** Teachers request research, especially information and data regarding effective practices and models, particularly in the areas of

curriculum integration, teaching strategies, inclusion of special needs students, developmentally appropriate practice, nongraded primaries, vocational education, and outcome-based education. Development and dissemination of information, effective teaching methods, and materials are needed in these areas as well. Increased and improved training and inservice opportunities and improved administrative leadership and support were cited the most often, indicating a strong need for training and technical assistance services. Increased time for planning, collaboration, and materials development and identification of funding sources were also mentioned as assistance needs by many teachers.

- **Principals:** The need for staff development and training was cited often by principals. Research, development, and dissemination of promising practices and models were expressed as needs, particularly in the areas of curriculum integration, outcome-based education, nongraded primaries, developmentally appropriate practices, and vocational education. Technical assistance, consultation, networking, and evaluation were all cited as assistance needs related to curriculum and instruction. There is widespread need for resources, such as funding and time as well.

- **Superintendents:** Research, dissemination of promising practices and information, and staff training with regard to outcome-based education, nongraded and multiage structures, curriculum development and integration, and vocational education/technical training were cited as assistance needs by many superintendents. Several respondents are seeking consultation and expertise in these areas as they plan and implement changes in district curriculum and instruction. Assistance with strengthening community support, networking, and evaluating the effectiveness of changes were also cited. As with teachers and principals, there was widespread expression of the need for resources, such as funding, time, and staff.

School structure, governance, and finance

- **Teachers:** Increased funding was cited by the majority of teachers who expressed priorities related to school structure, governance, and finance. Research and development, especially studies and syntheses, are needed to identify promising restructuring practices, effective school scheduling options, and strategies to improve community involvement, support, and awareness of issues. Assistance with the implementation of site-based decision making and management is also being sought. Other needs cited by teachers reflected the increasing expectation to accomplish more with fewer resources--there is need for time, staff, administrative support and leadership, space, funding alternatives, and supportive legislation.

- **Principals:** Development and dissemination of promising practices and staff training and conferences are needed, according to principals, to address priorities such as school restructuring and improvement, site-based management and site-based decision making. The need for expertise, consultation, and technical assistance with planning, implementation, and evaluation of reform efforts was expressed by many principals. Strategies for increasing support from and improving communication among administrators, staff, parents, and the community are also needed as schools pursue reform efforts. Attention to the adequacy and consistency

of funding mechanisms and to the problems of overcrowding and facilities improvements is needed.

- **Superintendents:** Among superintendents who responded to the LEA survey, many expressed the need for the development and dissemination of successful restructuring strategies and funding alternatives. Staff training, state and local leadership and support, and networking are needed in planning and implementing widespread reform efforts and site-based decision making and/or management. Consultation and technical assistance with strategic planning and evaluation are needed by several superintendents, as well.

Student needs

- **Teachers:** Staff training and technical assistance are needed to assist staff in meeting the needs of students. Research, development, and dissemination of information and data regarding effective teaching styles, strategies, motivational techniques, and curriculum options are needed by teachers to respond effectively to the needs of all students, to address growing discipline and behavior problems, and to improve students' multicultural sensitivity, respect, and self-esteem. Assistance with strengthening community collaboration and parent involvement was also cited. Teachers indicated a strong need for more staff (especially counselors), smaller class sizes, increased administrative support, and increased funding.

- **Principals:** Among principals, staff training was cited most often as the assistance they and their staff need to assist them in meeting the needs of students and improving student achievement. They are especially concerned about responding effectively to the needs of at-risk students, improving student behavior, motivation and self-esteem, mainstreaming special needs students in the classroom, and providing effective programs and services for special needs students. Principals are also seeking promising practices, effective strategies, funding alternatives, and research in these areas. Increased resources (staff and time), as well as support from social service agencies and other community entities, were expressed by some principals.

- **Superintendents:** Staff training, again, was the assistance need expressed by a large percentage of superintendents, who are also concerned about meeting the needs of all students, especially those at risk of school failure, effectively mainstreaming special needs students in the classroom, providing appropriate programs and services for special needs students, improving student achievement, increasing multicultural sensitivity, and improving student behavior, self-esteem, and motivation. Technical assistance, information about funding sources, promising practices, and research were also cited by many superintendents.

Education profession

- **Teachers:** Improved and increased staff development and training opportunities are needed across a wide-range of issue areas, including curriculum and instruction, meeting student needs, and student assessment. Teachers also expressed a need for more administrative support, more time

to work together, more teaching and counseling staff, and more resources for professional development. Dissemination of effective strategies was also cited as an assistance need by many.

- **Principals:** Staff development and training, research, promising practices, and effective strategies were all cited by principals as assistance needs related to issues such as improving instructional methods and skills, developing consistency in staff development, improving administrative supervision, and enhancing team teaching, staff collaboration, and communication are areas of concern. Information, planning assistance, and technical assistance are needed by some as well.

- **Superintendents:** Increased assistance with planning and implementing staff training and development was a need expressed by many superintendents, as were research, materials, and resources (funding and time). Information about promising practices, effective strategies (especially with regard to improving community involvement and support), networking, and collaboration were also cited as assistance needs. Updating instructional approaches, increasing teacher accountability, enhancing cooperative teaching, addressing personnel issues, and increasing staff motivation and administrative leadership are areas of concern.

Technology

- **Teachers:** Teachers are seeking help with identifying funding sources, accessing and developing staff training, integrating technology into curriculum and instruction, acquiring more equipment and software, and implementing promising practices. There is need for research and dissemination of information.

- **Principals:** Identifying and coordinating funding resources, staff training, planning assistance, research, and promising practices were types of assistance needed by many principals. They are particularly interested in increasing the use and improving the effectiveness of technology in their schools and integrating technology into the curriculum.

- **Superintendents:** Many superintendents indicated they need assistance with identifying funding sources, providing staff development and training, planning, and implementing successful research-based models. They are concerned about increasing the use of technology, integrating technology into the curriculum, acquiring and upgrading computer equipment as trends change, and expanding telecommunications capability.

Family and community involvement and support

- **Teachers:** There is widespread need for research, development, and dissemination of effective strategies for strengthening family and community involvement and support. Assistance with establishing links between schools, business, and community services and with integrating social services within the school was also cited. Funding and staff development in this area were needs expressed by teachers as well.

- **Principals:** Principals are seeking ideas, effective strategies, and staff training to support their efforts to strengthen family and community involvement, support, and collaboration.

- **Superintendents:** Training, research, and promising practices are being sought by superintendents who are trying to increase family and community involvement and support.

Student assessment

- **Teachers:** New ideas and assessment options are needed by many teachers, as are staff training in assessment and district support and time to experiment and practice. Teachers indicated the need to ensure efficiency, as well as effectiveness, in transitioning to new assessment methods and systems.

- **Principals:** Principals expressed a need for research on alternative and improved assessment methods, information about promising practices, and assistance with staff training and development.

- **Superintendents:** Training and materials, instrument development, research, and promising assessment practices were assistance needs expressed by superintendents.

3. Advisory Group Survey

Members of NWREL's advisory groups were surveyed to solicit their views on the impact of 12 emerging issues (survey findings were described earlier) and to obtain more specific information regarding the types of R&D assistance NWREL could provide in addressing these issues. Of the 105 members surveyed, nearly 50 percent responded. Advisory group members' responses regarding R&D assistance needs are reported in this section.

Figure 26 displays the percentages of respondents who indicated particular types of R&D assistance NWREL could provide to best assist educators with each emerging issue. Respondents were given the list of RDDS categories and asked to check all the types of assistance they felt applied. (Please note that the category "design/planning," unfortunately, was omitted from the survey questionnaire, and so data are not available for this particular type of assistance.)

Advisory group members indicated that three emerging issues are having both a broad impact (affecting more than 75 percent of respondents) and a deep impact (having a major effect on at least 35 percent of respondents). These were **Integration of Education and Human Services, Systemic Change,** and **Early Childhood Education.** For these issues, large percentages of advisory group members suggested the following types of R&D assistance are needed:

- **Integration of Education and Human Service:** More than 50 percent of respondents indicated that *synthesizing knowledge*, *information services*, *networking and referral*, and *technical assistance* would best assist educators in addressing this issue.

- **Systemic Change:** To assist educators with this issue, more than 50 percent of the respondents believe NWREL should *create knowledge*,

Figure 26

R & D Assistance Needs Related to Emerging Issues

	Emerging Issues	Research		Development		Dissemination			Service				
		Create Knowledge	Create Data	Synthesize Knowledge	Apply Knowledge	Information Service	Networking/ Referral	Convening	Technical Assistance	Training	Needs Id / Assessment	Evaluation	Testing / Assessment
1.	Current State of Education	51.9%	44.2%	65.4%	32.7%	51.9%	57.7%	28.9%	50.0%	42.3%	36.5%	32.7%	19.2%
2.	Systemic Change	55.8%	34.6%	65.4%	46.2%	53.9%	46.2%	25.0%	65.4%	53.9%	32.7%	32.7%	13.5%
3.	Integration of Education and Human Services	40.4%	46.2%	69.2%	36.5%	51.9%	65.4%	36.5%	55.8%	44.2%	44.2%	32.7%	15.4%
4.	Teachers as Professionals	46.2%	38.5%	59.6%	34.6%	50.0%	38.5%	15.4%	28.9%	40.4%	25.0%	32.7%	23.1%
5.	Educational Choice	40.4%	44.2%	48.1%	32.7%	53.9%	26.9%	21.2%	23.1%	5.8%	26.9%	19.2%	13.5%
6.	Financing Schools	36.5%	44.2%	55.8%	40.4%	53.9%	25.0%	21.2%	48.1%	36.5%	26.9%	36.5%	11.5%
7.	Early Childhood Education	44.2%	48.1%	59.6%	50.0%	59.6%	46.2%	32.7%	63.5%	50.0%	32.7%	40.4%	19.2%
8.	Site-Based Decision Making	42.3%	48.1%	65.4%	40.4%	46.2%	50.0%	28.9%	61.5%	42.3%	30.8%	48.1%	15.4%
9.	Student Assessment	55.8%	53.9%	61.5%	51.9%	63.5%	46.2%	28.9%	63.5%	59.6%	28.9%	42.3%	40.4%
10.	Business Involvement	36.5%	30.8%	51.9%	30.8%	44.2%	40.4%	17.3%	28.9%	23.1%	23.1%	23.1%	11.5%
11.	Science and Math	36.5%	34.6%	51.9%	38.5%	55.8%	50.0%	30.8%	48.1%	44.2%	23.1%	23.1%	32.7%
12.	Deregulation	40.4%	28.9%	50.0%	34.6%	48.1%	32.7%	15.4%	36.5%	19.2%	30.8%	19.2%	5.8%

synthesize knowledge, provide *information services*, provide *technical assistance*, and provide *training*.

- **Early Childhood Education:** More than 50 percent of respondents suggested that *synthesizing knowledge*, *applying knowledge*, and providing *information services*, *technical assistance*, and *training* are the best ways in which NWREL can assist educators in addressing this issue.

Two emerging issues having a relatively broad impact on advisory group members (affecting more than 75 percent) were **Current State of Education** and **Site-Based Decision Making.** R&D assistance needs related to these issues included:

- **Current State of Education:** *Creating knowledge*, *synthesizing knowledge*, providing *information services*, *networking and referral*, and providing *technical assistance* were types of R&D assistance suggested by more than 50 percent of the respondents.

- **Site-Based Decision Making:** More than 50 percent of the respondents indicated NWREL could best assist educators with this issue by *synthesizing knowledge*, facilitating *networking and referral*, and providing *technical assistance*.

Emerging issues having a relatively deep impact (having a major effect on at least 35 percent of advisory group members) were **Financing Schools** and **Student Assessment.** To assist educators with these issues, advisory group members suggested the following types of R&D assistance are needed:

- **Financing Schools:** *Synthesizing knowledge* and providing *information services* were suggested by more than 50 percent of respondents as ways in which NWREL could assist educators with this issue.

- **Student Assessment:** More types of R&D assistance were suggested by at least 50 percent of the respondents for this issue than for any other issue. Advisory group members indicated NWREL could best assist educators by *creating knowledge*, *creating (generating data)*, *synthesizing knowledge*, *applying knowledge*, providing *information services*, providing *technical assistance* and providing *training*. Interestingly, *evaluation* and *testing and assessment* were not suggested by a majority of the respondents.

To assist educators with the emerging issues having some regional impact but not having a relatively broad or deep impact, advisory group members indicated a need for the following types of assistance:

- **Teachers as Professionals:** More than 50 percent of respondents suggested that *synthesizing knowledge* and providing *information services* would assist educators with this issue.

- **Educational Choice:** Providing *information services* about this issue was the only type of R&D assistance suggested by more than 50 percent of advisory group members.

- **Business Involvement:** A majority of respondents indicated that *synthesizing knowledge* would be helpful assistance to educators in the region.

- **Science and Math:** *Synthesizing knowledge*, providing *information services*, and facilitating *networking and referral* were types of assistance more than 50 percent of the respondents felt NWREL could provide in addressing this issue.

- **Deregulation:** Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that *synthesizing knowledge* would be the best assistance NWREL could provide educators in addressing this issue.

With respect to more than half of the emerging issues, *synthesizing knowledge*, providing *information services*, and providing *technical assistance* were seen by at least 50 percent of the respondents as the best ways NWREL could assist educators in the region. For a third of the issues, *networking and referral*, *creating knowledge*, and *training* were suggested by at least 50 percent of the respondents. These types of assistance needs span the RDDS continuum, indicating regional need for research, development, dissemination, and services.

Some types of R&D assistance were suggested by advisory group members for only a few or none of the issues. These were: *creating (or generating) data*, *applying knowledge*, *convening*, *needs identification and assessment*, *evaluation*, and *testing assessment*. Perhaps the types of assistance which were suggested most often and by large numbers of respondents would indeed be more effective in addressing the issues, but it is also likely that respondents are not fully aware of NWREL's capability across the full range of RDDS services.

V. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The 1992 regional needs assessment has three objectives: (1) to identify current and emerging issues which are increasingly affecting educators and others working to improve education in the region; (2) to identify R&D assistance needs related to current and emerging issues; and (3) to assess implications of the current issues, major emerging issues, and R&D assistance needs for NWREL's program and policy development. In this chapter, findings from this year's needs assessment are summarized and then implications for program policy are discussed.

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A large-scale effort to identify and refine both current and emerging issues was undertaken this year to provide a broad base of short- and longer-range needs information from a variety of data sources. Information from major surveys of local educators, school boards, and NWREL's advisory groups were supplemented by data from NWREL's ongoing needs clarification reporting system and PARS client follow-up surveys to provide a range of perspectives on needs and priorities in the region. Findings regarding current and emerging issues are summarized first, followed by a description of related R&D assistance needs and a discussion of the match between regional needs and NWREL's program policy.

1. Current Issues Facing Northwest Educators

Several data sources provided information about current issues affecting educators at various levels, including needs clarification requests, PARS client follow-up surveys, advisory group discussions, sections of the LEA survey, and the school board objectives survey. The following issues or issue areas appeared to be of continued or increasing concern:

- **School improvement continues to challenge regional educators, with the focus shifting toward the future and systemic change approaches.** All of the data sources indicated that concern and interest with school improvement is continuing and increasing, especially with regard to strategic planning, restructuring, implementing state reform initiatives, pursuing systemic change, evaluating the effectiveness of reform efforts and programs; and implementing site-based management and decision making. Many school boards indicated their districts' are engaged in strategic planning and goal-setting processes to further their school improvement efforts. Reorganizing and restructuring schooling is having a *major* effect on at least 40 percent of every LEA survey respondent group (teachers, principals, and superintendents). Nongraded primaries and multiage classroom arrangements, modified organizational and administrative structures, and alternative school day schedules and school year calendars are increasingly being considered. Systemic, comprehensive change approaches, and using data to support policy, were evident areas of concern for some advisory groups this year.

- **School finance is a growing concern.** Concern about finance is a perennial favorite when educators are asked about educational needs, but this year's needs assessment activities revealed a deepening sense of urgency. Assuring adequate

funding for education was one of five current issues having both a broad impact (affecting more than 80 percent of LEA survey respondents) and a deep impact (having a *major* effect on at least 40 percent of LEA survey respondents) on educators in the region. Resource coordination and allocation has remained a concern to advisory groups during the past four years and was one of the top priorities stated by school boards in their goal and objectives statements. Facilities increasingly are needed to alleviate overcrowding, while the stable, long-term revenue sources so essential to implementing reform and assuring program quality are seen as declining.

- **Curriculum and instruction are commanding increased attention.** Issues in this area continue to be of widespread concern with an increasing focus on integrating subjects and/or skills (particularly, science, math, reading, critical thinking, writing, cooperative learning, and decision making), improving alignment between curriculum and assessment, defining performance outcomes, and implementing developmentally appropriate practices. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of the curriculum is having a broad impact (affecting more than 80 percent of respondents) and a deep impact (having a major impact on at least 40 percent) on principals and superintendents but not as much on teachers.

  Increasing attention to vocational education, technical training, job skills, career counseling, and applied academics was evident across the data sources. Local educators are also concerned about implementing nongraded primaries and mainstreaming special needs students. Developing in students a desire for life-long learning, and preparing them for the 21st century, are common emphases.

- **Meeting the needs of all students remains a formidable task.** There appears to be a shift from *learning more about* the needs of children and youth, towards *finding ways* to meet the needs of, and improve achievement and performance among, children and youth. Improving practice and implementing new strategies is a growing focus. Meeting the needs of at-risk students, *with emphasis on assuring success for all students*, has been expressed as a primary need by advisory committees each year over the past four years and is reflected in the other data sources as well. Responsiveness to students with special needs or disabilities, and the effects of inclusion and mainstreaming on all students, were issues expressed by several local educators this year. Emphasis on developing effective and coordinated programs to meet the full range of student needs, and increasing counseling and guidance services, was evident as well.

  Improving student achievement, performance, and competence was one of the most widely shared priorities among local practitioners and school boards. Many districts are also focusing on increasing graduation rates and the numbers of students who transition successfully to higher education programs and employment after high school.

  Improving student behavior and discipline in the classroom and at school appears to be of growing concern, as well as increasing multicultural awareness, sensitivity, and respect among students and staff. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem was one of five current issues having both a broad impact (affecting more than 80 percent of LEA survey respondents) and a deep impact (having a major effect on at least 40 percent of LEA survey respondents). Multicultural pluralism and equity were raised as areas of concern by several advisory groups this year.

Improving student interaction, student-staff relations, and school climate were areas of need cited across data sources. Common priorities among school boards included recognizing excellence and achievement among students (and staff), improving internal communication, and promoting school spirit, unity, and sense of community.

- **Defining and assessing outcomes is central.** Assistance needs are increasing with respect to staff development in assessment, expanding assessment alternatives, and integrating assessment and curriculum. Superintendents, principals, and teachers responding to the LEA survey indicated that aligning assessment, curriculum, and instruction and developing performance assessment methods are two issues that are having both a broad impact (affecting more than 80 percent of respondents) and a deep impact (having a major effect on at least 40 percent of respondents). Revising report cards and grading procedures, and ensuring appropriate and effective use of standardized assessment methods, were cited as priorities by local practitioners. Advisory groups continue to encourage an increased focus on defining and measuring a broader range of student outcomes.

- **Teachers require support and respect.** Staff development and training needs are increasing across the various issue areas, particularly with respect to finding ways to meet the needs of all students, improving student performance and behavior, increasing instructional effectiveness, and improving assessment methods. Local educators also expressed a need for improved administrator support and leadership, higher performance expectations, and better communication and collaboration among staff, administrators, parents, and the community. Many practitioners are concerned about how educators' roles and responsibilities are changing, how staff morale and motivation can be strengthened, and how highly qualified staff can be retained. For superintendents and principals, staff evaluation and supervision were also of concern.

- **The full community must be engaged.** Need for assistance in this area is rising, particularly with regard to identifying and implementing effective strategies for increasing family and community involvement and support at the local level. Increasing parent/community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education was one of five current issues having both a broad impact (affecting more than 80 percent of teachers, principals, and superintendents) and a deep impact (having a major effect on at least 40 percent of LEA survey respondents). Local educators are seeking support from families in the form of establishing and maintaining high standards for their children, sharing responsibility for educational outcomes, and participating in school activities, goal setting, and decision making processes. Other priorities included improving communication between home and school, implementing a community service program for students, and increasing parent and adult education opportunities.

Improving relations and communication with the broader community, informing the public about school improvement efforts and successes, and receiving feedback from the community are top priorities in many school districts. Developing partnerships and collaborative relationships with businesses, social service agencies, and community organizations and, to a lesser extent, integrating social services with education, are important priorities for several at the local level. Collaboration among families, schools, and communities in support of schooling has remained an area of concern discussed by advisory committees over the past

four years. This year, several advisory groups discussed community-initiated planning and improvement in particular.

- **Technology is an emerging force.** Technology continues to be of concern and interest to many educators in the region. Integrating technology into curriculum and instruction, identifying technology needs, evaluating the effectiveness and impact of using technology in the classroom, and implementing distance learning technologies and telecommunications are areas that are emphasized. Many districts are focused on planning, funding, and staying up-to-date.

2. Major Emerging Issues in the Region

Twelve major, emerging issues, or trends, were identified in the previous year's needs assessment. Local educators (including teachers, principals, and superintendents) and NWREL advisory group members responded to a survey asking the extent to which they agree these trends are increasingly affecting their work. Findings included:

- The trend towards increasing efforts to **Integrate Education and Human Services** to provide comprehensive support to children and families and the trend towards employing **Systemic Approaches to Change** appear to be having both a broad impact (affecting more than 75 percent of respondents) and a deep impact (having a *major* impact on at least 35 percent of respondents) in the region, according to teachers, principals, superintendents, and advisory group members. Importantly, these two emerging issues had also been very highly rated by policy makers (including school improvement organization leaders, government leaders, human service agency heads, and business foundations) during the previous year.

- More than 75 percent of principals, superintendents, and advisory group members agreed or strongly agreed that a trend towards a more positive view of the **Current State of Education** is increasingly affecting their work. Ten percent fewer, but still a large majority, of teachers also agreed or strongly agreed that this is an emerging issue.

- Other emerging issues validated by widespread agreement by some but not all respondent groups included: (1) attempts to tie resource allocation to reforms such as improved outcomes and site-based decision making are growing (**Financing Schools**); (2) schools are increasingly entering into partnerships with early childhood programs (**Early Childhood Education**); (3) improving student outcomes through decentralized day-to-day administrative and instructional decisions at the school site is a burgeoning interest (**Site-Based Decision-Making**); (4) new student performance assessment methods are emerging (**Student Assessment**); (5) improving science and math education is increasingly seen as critical to the future success of students (**Science and Math**); and (6) there is growing concern that federal and state regulations tend to overly limit essential professional flexibility (**Deregulation**).

- Emerging issues receiving lower levels of agreement among respondent groups than those described above were: (1) a view of teachers as professionals working from a well established knowledge base is replacing the view of teachers as semiskilled workers (**Teachers as Professionals**); (2) business is increasingly involved in efforts to improve education, with a discernible shift toward proactive leadership in defining what needs to be done to improve the system of education (**Business Involvement**); and (3) legislative efforts to encourage and support choice within the system are increasing (**Educational Choice**).

Local educators noted several other emerging issues affecting their work. Those not already mentioned in this chapter included: changing roles for school boards with regard to reform processes; increasing pressure from special interest groups; growing need for state legislative support for site-based reform; increasing racial issues and tensions; increasing violence and criminal activity in schools; declining numbers of people becoming educators (administrators and teachers); and increasing need for improving staff preparation.

A special note is necessary regarding the growing national and regional emphasis on preparing students for work in the 21st century. Local educators brought attention to this issue through their open-ended comments on the LEA survey, school boards included this as a focus in their goals and objectives statements, and other 1992 RNA data sources revealed growing concern about preparing the workforce of tomorrow. Data received this year related to this important emerging issue were *qualitative* in nature, and while descriptive, did not provide much information about the scope of impact this issue is having in the region. More *quantitative* data will be collected in next year's needs assessment.

3. R&D Assistance Needs

R&D assistance needs expressed across data sources were wide-ranging, spanning the continuum of research, development, dissemination, and service activities NWREL provides (RDDS). Assistance needs which appeared to be broadly shared among various constituent groups are summarized here by RDDS category.

Research. Research activities which create knowledge and data are being sought in emerging areas such as the implementation of nongraded primaries and multiage classrooms; further development of assessment alternatives which are performance-based and authentic; inclusion of special needs students in the classroom; school restructuring and reorganization options; use and effectiveness of technology; and systemic approaches to change.

Development. Need for development assistance (synthesizing and applying knowledge and data) was evident with respect to many current issues and emerging trends. Knowledge and data about effective strategies and promising practices are being sought by local educators, especially practitioners involved in school improvement and systemic change efforts and concerned about meeting the needs of all students and improving student achievement, motivation, and behavior. Effective teaching styles and curriculum options are needed to respond effectively to students needs and to improve students' multicultural sensitivity, respect for others, and self-esteem. Appropriate assessment methods are needed to measure student performance and other student outcomes. Schools and districts are also looking for strategies to strengthen family and community involvement, support, and collaboration and to support efforts to integrate education and human services. Early childhood education programs, developmentally-appropriate practices, curriculum integration, vocational education, outcome-based education, use of technology, and improved resource coordination are other areas needing further development in the region.

Dissemination. Dissemination of information, particularly effective strategies and promising practices, is needed about all of the areas mentioned above. Practitioners frequently request research information to assist them in considering alternatives or to assist them in planning and implementing school improvement processes, instructional strategies, and collaboration and integration efforts. Assistance with networking, referral,

and convening was requested less often, but these functions were cited in relation to collaboration building and integration of education and human services; broadening support at the local and state levels for widespread, state reform; and strengthening community understanding and support of school improvement efforts and site-based decision making.

Service. Technical assistance and consultation is needed in a wide range of areas, including strategic planning, systemic reform, curriculum integration, restructuring and integrating vocational education, student assessment, collaboration and integration efforts; site-based decision making and management; communications improvement; and early childhood education. Many districts, faced with cut backs and funding limitations, are also seeking assistance with coordinating resources efficiently and effectively, identifying alternative funding sources, and cutting costs without compromising quality.

Staff training needs are evident across all need areas, but especially with respect to curriculum integration; student assessment; instructional strategies for improving student achievement, behavior, motivation, and self-esteem; developmentally appropriate practice; administrative leadership and supervision; staff collaboration and team building; and strengthening family and community support and involvement.

Practitioners are seeking planning assistance with school improvement and reform efforts, use of technology and technology integration, and staff development. Assistance with program evaluation and evaluation of school improvement and reform efforts was expressed as a need by several principals and superintendents. Requests for needs identification services and testing/assessment services were less evident than other R&D activities in 1992 RNA data sources.

Evidence from the 1992 regional needs assessment process confirms NWREL's belief that a mix of R&D strategies is most desirable and responsive to its regional constituents.

4. Match Between Regional Needs and NWREL Program Policy

NWREL's program policy contains a set of strategic goals which guide programmatic work. Built upon broad areas of identified need, these strategic goals are reviewed each year to determine their continuing relevance to current needs, emerging trends, and related R&D assistance needs in the region. Conclusions regarding the match between regional needs identified in 1992 and NWREL's current set of strategic goals include the following:

Goal 1: Improving the Outcomes of Schooling

Needs data clearly indicate that a broad range of student outcomes, including student achievement, motivation, behavior, employability, self-esteem, and health, are increasingly driving school improvement efforts. Many schools and districts are engaged in processes designed to help them determine a shared set of desired performance outcomes. Integrating subjects and skills across the curriculum, using developmentally appropriate practices, strengthening vocational and technical education programs, increasing counseling and guidance services, and improving instruction in subject areas such as math, science, and reading, are current and emerging focus areas. Increasing attention is being given to systemic change approaches to reform. Schools and districts are trying to reorganize their administration, restructure their curriculum and instruction, maximize time and resources, reduce class size, and implement site-based decision making and management. Nongraded primaries, multiage classrooms, and school scheduling alternatives are of interest to a growing number of educators. Awareness of how all of

these reform issues are tied to, and being driven by, desired outcomes of schooling is growing.

Goal 2: Enhancing the Education Profession

Staff development, training, and involvement in school improvement are areas of increasing need in the region. Local educators are focused on learning how to improve student performance and effectively meet the full range of student needs, and they are concerned about receiving adequate administrative, resource, and public support in that effort. Many cited the need for staff training in areas such as student assessment, effective instructional strategies, use of technology, and strengthening family and community involvement. Worry that too few people are entering the profession was expressed by several practitioners, as was the need for higher performance standards and expectations, more leadership, and improved collaboration and communication among staff. Assistance with enhancing the education profession was cited as a need across data sources and with respect to a variety of issues.

Goal 3: Enhancing Equitable Treatment of Students

Needs data continue to reflect issues related to meeting the needs of a diverse student population and supporting the success of all students. Promoting respect of diversity and multiculturalism among students is a growing emphasis, as students' behavior toward one another is a rising concern. Local educators also expressed issues related to the effects and outcomes for all students of inclusion and mainstreaming of students with special needs and disabilities in the classroom. Understanding of and responsiveness to these issues, and other issues of equity, continues to be of great importance.

Goal 4: Strengthening Family and Community Support

Regional concern is rising with regard to meeting the needs of all students, accommodating the growing diversity among students, and enhancing student behavior and discipline. Clarifying the role of schools in meeting the full range of students' needs continues to be a challenge. Local educators are seeking support from families in the form of setting high standards for their children, sharing the responsibility for educational outcomes, and participating in school activities, goal setting, and decision making processes. Educators are seeking successful strategies to strengthen family and community involvement, support, and collaboration. Improving relations and communication with the broader community are top priorities for many schools and districts. Integrating education and human services and enhancing early childhood education are increasingly being pursued, but assistance in these areas is needed. The need for leadership and development support for regional efforts is high.

Goal 5: Serving Distressed Schools and Communities

An emphasis on locally-initiated and community-based improvement strategies is growing among educators in the region. Increasingly concerned with meeting the needs of at-risk students, educators are seeking effective methods for building partnerships with families and community players. Assistance with collaboration development, change processes, program development, and resource coordination are needed in distressed areas of the region.

Goal 6: Strengthening the Ability to Assess Outcomes

Defining and measuring a broad range of student outcomes, developing alternative student assessment measures, integrating curriculum and assessment, and staff training in assessment are areas of increasing concern and interest to classroom teachers and building administrators. Assistance needs related to program evaluation, and to a lesser extent, using data to support policy and programmatic decisions, were also evident in data collected from local educators. The need for leadership and assistance in all of these areas continues to be widespread throughout the region.

Goal 7: School and Public Finance

The expectation to "do more with less" appears to be a trend of growing concern and urgency among educators in the region. Assuring adequate and stable funding for education, identifying funding options, and coordinating and allocating resources more effectively were issues raised across data sources. Increasing numbers of districts are facing cut backs and funding limitations at the same time they need to expand their staff, services, and facilities to meet student needs. Assistance needs are growing with respect to coordinating resources efficiently and effectively, identifying alternative funding sources, and cutting costs without compromising quality.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM POLICY

This regional needs assessment provides a broad-based picture of current and emerging needs in the region. Examining the nature, continuity, and emergence of major need areas is important for assessing the relevance of NWREL's program policy and how it might be modified to respond effectively to current and emerging needs. The implications of 1992 needs assessment findings for policy and program development are discussed here.

1. Policy Implications

The NWREL Board of Directors annually reviews regional needs assessment findings to determine directions for NWREL program policy. This year, the critical policy question is:

- Do NWREL's seven Strategic Goals appropriately and clearly reflect the major needs expressed in the region?

The continuity revealed in the major need areas described in the previous summary section and their connection to NWREL's Strategic Goals indicate that the current goals have proven generally appropriate, informative, and responsive to the needs of the region. Expression of need in the area addressed by the School and Public Finance goal was relatively low in previous years but has increased this year. Generally, needs data suggest that the Strategic Goals are functioning well as a framework for program policy.

2. Program Development Implications

The 1992 RNA has revealed major areas of need through the identification of current and emerging issues. R&D assistance needs related to the major needs were identified as well. The critical programmatic question is:

- Do NWREL's seven Strategic Goals guide programmatic work to be responsive to R&D assistance needs expressed in the region?

Needs data indicate that the current set of Strategic Goals appropriately reflects the major need areas expressed in the region. However, shifts within the areas currently addressed by NWREL's Strategic Goals and the emergence of new trends indicate potential directions for expansion of current services and development of new service capabilities within areas of work addressed by the Strategic Goals. These include:

- Continuation and expansion of services in support of school improvement efforts, with an emphasis on achieving systemic change and strengthening links to a broad range of outcomes
- Continuation and expansion of NWREL's capability to support and identify successful strategies for service integration and collaboration efforts
- Increased capability to assist with curriculum and instruction issues, including integration across subjects; improvement of math, science and reading instruction; development of effective vocational education, technical training, and applied academics programs; implementation of nongraded primaries and multiage classrooms; and use of developmentally appropriate practice
- Continuation and expansion of R&D efforts to support strengthened student assessment, including development of assessment alternatives and staff training
- Increased assistance with the development of strategies for addressing the full range of student needs and for enhancing student behavior, motivation, and respect for diversity
- Increased attention to the development of strategies for increasing family and community involvement, support, and collaboration
- Increased capability to assist with the development of community-initiated improvement efforts
- Expanded capability to assist with school finance and resource coordination issues

APPENDICES

Appendix A	PARS Client Follow-Up Survey Instrument
Appendix B	LEA Survey: Current Issue Version
Appendix C	LEA Survey: Emerging Issue Version
Appendix D	Advisory Group Survey Instrument
Appendix E	LEA Survey Data Tables for the Region and by Respondent Group

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory • 101 S.W. Main, Suite 500 • Portland, OR 97204

	Excellent	*Good*	*Satisfactory*	*Fair*	*Poor*
1. How do you rate the quality of NWREL's:					
a. overall product/service?	A	B	C	D	E
b. planning of the product/service?	A	B	C	D	E
c. timeliness of the product/service?	A	B	C	D	E
d. responsiveness to needed changes?	A	B	C	D	E
2. How well did the NWREL product/service meet your needs and expectations?	A	B	C	D	E

3. NWREL's product/service has had the following impact: *(please check all that apply)*

- ☐ New skills and/or knowledge were acquired.
- ☐ Decision making and/or planning was facilitated.
- ☐ Changes in professional practices were implemented.
- ☐ The quality of professional practices was improved.
- ☐ Student performance was positively affected.

Comments: _____

_____

_____

4. What can NWREL do to improve this service/product?

Comments: _____

_____

_____

5. What issues affecting schools do you believe NWREL should address in the future?

Comments: _____

_____

_____

6. Are any corrections to this address needed?

Educational Priorities of the Region: A Needs Assessment Survey of School Districts in the Northwest 1992

Superintendent Response Form

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

Over the next few months, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) will be preparing three-year plans to address educational priorities in the region. As part of our effort to assure that our work aligns with the priority needs of education professionals in the Northwest (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington), NWREL periodically conducts a survey to identify current and emerging needs as perceived in the region's schools and districts. You have been selected as part of the sample for our survey.

NWREL is an independent, nonprofit research and development institution established in 1966 to help schools and communities provide equitable, high quality educational programs to improve outcomes for children, youth, and adults. NWREL assists education, government, community agencies, business, and industry by:

1. Developing and disseminating effective educational products and procedures
2. Conducting research on educational needs and problems
3. Providing technical assistance in education problem solving
4. Evaluating effectiveness of educational programs and projects
5. Providing training in educational planning, management, evaluation, and instruction
6. Serving as an information resource on effective educational programs and processes

Your answers to this survey, together with those of other superintendents, principals, and teachers throughout the region, will be used by our Board of Directors to set priorities for NWREL activities in the next several years. Please take a few minutes to respond to the survey questions. Your assistance will help ensure that NWREL can address your needs in the future. Thank you very much for contributing your information and insight.

This survey consists of two parts. Part A asks for your own priorities for educational improvement. In Part B you are asked to rate the importance of educational improvement issues that previously have been identified by NWREL clients.

PART A. PRIORITY AREAS FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Educational priorities change over time. NWREL's assistance efforts should be responsive to these changing needs of professionals in the region. Reflecting on your own work, identify areas in which improvement is needed.

1. Please describe the one, two, or three educational priorities in your district with which you are most highly concerned.

2. What help do you need with these priorities?

PART B. CURRENT AND EMERGING NEEDS OF SUPERINTENDENTS IN THE REGION

Our assessment of requests for assistance from the region has revealed a variety of areas for educational improvement. We would like to know the extent to which issues in these areas are currently affecting your work.

To assist us in setting priorities for assistance to educators, please consider the following issues and assess your own professional needs. For each issue, please circle the most appropriate response and then, if you have a specific idea of your assistance needs, please indicate the nature of the desired assistance in the second column.

Spaces have been provided where you may indicate issues that you recognize from your own vantage point.

For each statement, please rate:

A = Major effect B = Some effect C = Undecided D = Little effect E = No effect

ISSUES	What effect is this issue currently having on your work?	What specific assistance would you like most?
CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT		
1. Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum	A B C D E	
2. Developing a curriculum renewal and planning process	A B C D E	
3. Assuring curriculum and instruction are culturally/ ethnically appropriate	A B C D E	
4. Enhancing student transition from school to work	A B C D E	
5. Developing curriculum and instruction frameworks and standards in:		
English/language arts	A B C D E	
Science/mathematics	A B C D E	
Social studies	A B C D E	
Vocational education	A B C D E	
6. Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices	A B C D E	
7. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction	A B C D E	

A = Major effect B = Some effect C = Undecided D = Little effect E = No effect

ISSUES	What effect is this issue currently having on your work?	What specific assistance would you like most?
8. Developing student performance assessment methods	A B C D E	

SCHOOL STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, AND IMPROVEMENT

9. Establishing/maintaining site-based school improvement	A B C D E	
10. Establishing district-level strategic planning processes	A B C D E	
11. Pursuing systemic change	A B C D E	
12. Upgrading school facilities	A B C D E	
13. Using data in decision making	A B C D E	
14. Assuring equitable school funding	A B C D E	
15. Assuring adequate funding for education	A B C D E	
16. Reorganizing/restructuring schooling	A B C D E	
17. Evaluating program effectiveness	A B C D E	
18. Applying technology in instruction, management, and policy-making	A B C D E	
19. Exploring the impact of changing technology on schools and attitudes	A B C D E	

STUDENTS

20. Meeting the needs of diverse student populations	A B C D E	
21. Addressing the needs of limited-English-proficient students	A B C D E	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A = Major effect B = Some effect C = Undecided D = Little effect E = No effect

ISSUES	What effect is this issue currently having on your work?	What specific assistance would you like most?
22. Implementing effective substance abuse prevention strategies	A B C D E	
23. Using strategies to enhance student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem	A B C D E	
24. Developing early childhood interventions for at-risk students	A B C D E	
EDUCATION PROFESSION/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT		
25. Aligning preservice training and professional practice	A B C D E	
26. Recruiting and retaining good staff	A B C D E	
27. Reforming the content and process of inservice education	A B C D E	
28. Motivating and improving staff morale	A B C D E	
29. Enhancing school climate	A B C D E	
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT		
30. Increasing parent and community involvement in defining and achieving outcomes for education	A B C D E	
31. Increasing parent and community involvement in meeting noneducational needs of children	A B C D E	
32. Increasing collaboration among schools, community agencies, and the private sector	A B C D E	
33.	A B C D. E	

Your priorities and needs as indicated in this survey will greatly assist NWREL as we develop plans for assistance to the region's educators. Could you further indicate your familiarity with NWREL by checking one or more of these boxes?

- ____ I have not heard of NWREL before.
- ____ I have heard of NWREL's work, but only indirectly.
- ____ I have read materials from NWREL.
- ____ I have participated in NWREL activities, primarily in the one program area of _____.
- ____ I have participated in multiple NWREL activities.

Are any corrections to this address needed?

Thank you very much for your cooperation and assistance.
Your responses will enable us to serve the region's education professionals more effectively.

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed business reply envelope.

Educational Priorities of the Region: A Needs Assessment Survey of School Districts in the Northwest 1992

Superintendent Response Form

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NWREL is an independent, nonprofit research and development institution established in 1966 to help schools and communities provide equitable, high quality educational programs to improve outcomes for children, youth, and adults. NWREL assists education, government, community agencies, business, and industry by:

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3. Providing technical assistance in education problem solving
4. Evaluating effectiveness of educational programs and projects
5. Providing training in educational planning, management, evaluation, and instruction
6. Serving as an information resource on effective educational programs and processes

Your answers to this survey, together with those of other superintendents, principals, and teachers throughout the region, will be used by our Board of Directors to set priorities for NWREL activities in the next several years. Please take a few minutes to respond to the survey questions. Your assistance will help ensure that NWREL can address your needs in the future. Thank you very much for contributing your information and insight.

This survey consists of two parts. Part A asks for your own priorities for educational improvement. In Part B you are asked to rate the impact of emerging trends in education on your work.

PART A. PRIORITY AREAS FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Educational priorities change over time. NWREL's assistance efforts should be responsive to these changing needs of professionals in the region. Reflecting on your own work, identify areas in which improvement is needed.

1. Please describe the one, two, or three educational priorities in your district with which you are most highly concerned.

2. What help do you need with these priorities?

PART B. TRENDS IN THE REGION AND THEIR EFFECT ON SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

Large-scale trends in the make-up of the student population, in the structure of schooling, and the relation between the schools and their societal context are affecting education professionals, creating changing expectations for practice. Part B requests your assessment of the effect of 12 major trends on you as a professional. To help us set priorities for assistance to educators, please consider these trends and assess your own professional challenges and needs. For each trend, please circle the most appropriate response, and then, if you have a specific idea of your assistance needs, please indicate the nature of the desired assistance in the second column. Spaces have been provided where you may indicate other trends that you recognize from your own vantage point.

For each underlined statement, please rate:

A = Strongly Agree	B = Agree	C = Undecided	D = Disagree	E = Strongly Disagree

TREND 1: CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION

A shifting tone is evident in recent reports and statements by policy leaders about the current crisis state of education. Rather than viewing our current education system as an entire failure, both educators and noneducators are increasingly acknowledging some successes while identifying some specific persistent problems and challenges.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 2: SYSTEMIC CHANGE

A consensus is emerging that systemic change is needed to meet effectively the challenges of the future. "Fix the parts" and "fix the people" approaches to change must give way to integrated approaches which concentrate on "fixing the system."

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

A = Strongly Agree	B = Agree	C = Undecided	D = Disagree	E = Strongly Disagree

TREND 3: INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

Increasingly, schools alone cannot address the problems children are experiencing and bringing to school. Support is needed across the child's home, school, and community. As a response, efforts are increasing to integrate education with human services for providing comprehensive support to children and families.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 4: TEACHERS AS PROFESSIONALS

A view of teachers as professionals working from a well established knowledge base is replacing the view of teachers as semiskilled workers. This is a driving force behind many reforms of schools and teacher preparation programs.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 5: EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

Several states have formed education study commissions and proposed legislative initiatives. Educational choice is mentioned in almost every report, but there is no consensus on the issue. Legislative efforts to encourage and support choice within the system are increasing.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

A = Strongly Agree	B = Agree	C = Undecided	D = Disagree	E = Strongly Disagree

TREND 6: FINANCING SCHOOLS

Financing schools remains a high concern. While issues of adequacy and equity in funding persist, attempts to tie resource allocation to reforms such as improved outcomes and site-based decision making are growing.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 7: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Recognizing that children and families need more support than ever, and acknowledging that early intervention practices are effective, schools are increasingly entering into partnerships with early childhood programs. Strengthening relationships between early childhood and early elementary programming will smooth transitions and improve children's chances for success in the public school system.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 8: SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING

Site-based efforts continue to be a central focus of school reform. Two alternative approaches have emerged--one emphasizes management and the other emphasizes school improvement issues. The burgeoning overall interest is in improving student outcomes through decentralizing day-to-day administrative and instructional decisions to where the work of schooling is done--at the school site.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is
A B C D E	

A = Strongly Agree	B = Agree	C = Undecided	D = Disagree	E = Strongly Disagree

TREND 9: STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Schools are seeking new ways to assess students to achieve better accountability and connection to actual student performance outcomes. New student performance assessment methods are emerging, including systems of assessment designed to measure student outcomes based on portfolios of student work. Many of the new methods are being named "authentic" because they attempt to align the assessment of children's behaviors and skills closely with classroom instructional methods.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 10: BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Business is increasingly involved in efforts to improve education, with a discernible shift toward proactive leadership in defining what needs to be done to improve the system of education. State-level studies and commissions, as well as agendas for change articulated and monitored by major groups, have been the hallmark of this trend.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 11: SCIENCE AND MATH

The improvement of science and math education is increasingly seen as critical to the future success of students. The need for greater understanding and innovation is seen at all levels: (1) designing alternative forms of classroom assessment of science and math learning; (2) understanding the interplay between local needs and the articulation of state and national priorities; and (3) gaining deeper understanding about the science and math educational system.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

A = Strongly Agree	B = Agree	C = Undecided	D = Disagree	E = Strongly Disagree

TREND 12: DEREGULATION

Many educational reforms are pressing for deregulating education. There is a growing concern that federal and state regulations tend to overly limit essential professional flexibility needed by the building administrators and teachers who deal directly with students, families, and the community.

This trend is increasingly affecting my work.	The specific assistance I would like most is:
A B C D E	

TREND 13: I recognize an additional trend: _____

_____

_____

The assistance I would like in meeting this trend is: _____

_____

_____

TREND 14: I recognize an additional trend: _____

_____

_____

The assistance I would like in meeting this trend is: _____

_____

_____

- over -

Your priorities and needs as indicated in this survey will greatly assist NWREL as we develop plans for assistance to the region's educators. Could you further indicate your familiarity with NWREL by checking one or more of these boxes?

- ____ I have not heard of NWREL before.
- ____ I have heard of NWREL's work, but only indirectly.
- ____ I have read materials from NWREL.
- ____ I have participated in NWREL activities, primarily in the one program area of _____.
- ____ I have participated in multiple NWREL activities.

Are any corrections to this address needed?

Thank you very much for your cooperation and assistance.
Your responses will enable us to serve the region's education professionals more effectively.

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed business reply envelope.

Educational Priorities of the Region: A Needs Assessment Survey 1992

Advisory Group Member Response Form

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

Over the next few months, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) will be preparing three-year plans to address educational priorities in the region. As part of our needs assessment effort, NWREL surveyed a large sample of teachers, principals and superintendents in the region last spring to learn the extent to which a set of major trends are affecting their work in school districts and schools. As a member of one of NWREL's advisory groups, we would also like you to respond to these trends from your unique point of view. We hope you will give particularly close attention to suggesting specific ways in which NWREL could provide assistance to educators in the region.

The survey asks you to respond to twelve trends by:

1) rating the impact of each trend on your work,

2) suggesting appropriate R&D assistance approaches for each trend, and

3) identifying other major sources of assistance in the region.

There is space at the end of the survey for you to tell us of other important trends that you see impacting the region.

We appreciate your time and effort in assisting us with this needs assessment activity. Your insight will help us align our work with the priority needs in the region.

TREND 1: CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION

A shifting tone is evident in recent reports and statements by policy leaders about the current crisis state of education. Rather than viewing our current education system as an entire failure, *both educators and noneducators are increasingly acknowledging some successes while identifying some specific persistent problems and challenges.*

1) This trend is increasingly affecting my work:

❒ Strongly Agree ❒ Agree ❒ Undecided ❒ Disagree ❒ Strongly Disagree

2) NWREL could best assist educators with this trend by providing:

Research
❒ - Create knowledge
❒ - Create data

Development
❒ - Synthesize knowledge/data
❒ - Apply knowledge/data

Dissemination
❒ - Information services
❒ - Networking/referral
❒ - Convening

Service:
❒ - Technical assistance
❒ - Training
❒ - Needs identification/assessment
❒ - Evaluation
❒ - Testing/assessment

Other:
_____
_____

3) Who are other major sources of assistance with regard to this trend?

_____

TREND 2: SYSTEMIC CHANGE

A consensus is emerging that systemic change is needed to meet effectively the challenges of the future. "Fix the parts" and "fix the people" approaches to change must give way to integrated approaches which concentrate on "fixing the system."

1) This trend is increasingly affecting my work:

❒ Strongly Agree ❒ Agree ❒ Undecided ❒ Disagree ❒ Strongly Disagree

2) NWREL could best assist educators with this trend by providing:

Research
❒ - Create knowledge
❒ - Create data

Development
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❒ - Apply knowledge/data

Dissemination
❒ - Information services
❒ - Networking/referral
❒ - Convening

Service:
❒ - Technical assistance
❒ - Training
❒ - Needs identification/assessment
❒ - Evaluation
❒ - Testing/assessment

Other:
_____
_____

3) Who are other major sources of assistance with regard to this trend?

_____

TREND 3: INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

Increasingly, schools alone cannot address the problems children are experiencing and bringing to school. Support is needed across the child's home, school, and community. As a response, *efforts are increasing to integrate education with human services for providing comprehensive support to children and families.*

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Other:
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A view of teachers as professionals working from a well established knowledge base is replacing the view of teachers as semiskilled workers. This is a driving force behind many reforms of schools and teacher preparation programs.

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☐ - Convening

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☐ - Training
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Other:
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Several states have formed education study commissions and proposed legislative initiatives. Educational choice is mentioned in almost every report, but there is no consensus on the issue. *Legislative efforts to encourage and support choice within the system are increasing.*

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Other:
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_____

_____

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_____

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Other:

_____

_____

3) Who are other major sources of assistance with regard to this trend?

_____

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1) This trend is increasingly affecting my work:

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2) NWREL could best assist educators with this trend by providing:

Research
- ☐ - Create knowledge
- ☐ - Create data

Development
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- ☐ - Technical assistance
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- ☐ - Evaluation
- ☐ - Testing/assessment

Other:

_____

_____

3) Who are other major sources of assistance with regard to this trend?

_____

TREND 12: DEREGULATION

Many educational reforms are pressing for deregulating education. *There is growing concern that federal and state regulations tend to overly limit essential professional flexibility* needed by the building administrators and teachers who deal directly with students, families, and the community.

1) This trend is increasingly affecting my work:

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2) NWREL could best assist educators with this trend by providing:

Research
- ☐ - Create knowledge
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Service:
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Other:

_____

_____

3) Who are other major sources of assistance with regard to this trend?

_____

ADDITIONAL TREND: _____

_____

1) This trend is increasingly affecting my work:

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2) NWREL could best assist educators with this trend by providing:

Research
☐ - Create knowledge
☐ - Create data

Development
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☐ - Training
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Other:
_____

_____

3) Who are other major sources of assistance with regard to this trend?

_____

ADDITIONAL TREND: _____

_____

1) This trend is increasingly affecting my work:

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

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Research
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☐ - Technical assistance
☐ - Training
☐ - Needs identification/assessment
☐ - Evaluation
☐ - Testing/assessment

Other:
_____

_____

3) Who are other major sources of assistance with regard to this trend?

_____

Other Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are any corrections to this address needed?

Thank you very much for your time and assistance.

Your responses will enable us to serve the region more effectively.

Please return your completed survey in the enclosed business reply envelope.

12:

Regional Needs Assessment Results for the Region

Current Issues (N = 466/1846, return = 25%)	Major Effect	Some Effect	Broad Effect
Assuring adequate funding for education	61.16	21.46	82.62
Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction	50.43	32.62	83.05
Using strategies to enhance behavior, motivation, self-esteem	46.57	39.48	86.05
Assuring equitable school funding	44.85	23.18	68.03
Increasing p & c involvement in defining/achieving outcomes	44.21	37.34	81.55
Developing student performance assessment methods	42.92	37.12	80.04
Reorganizing/restructuring schooling	42.27	35.41	77.68
Meeting the needs of diverse student populations	41.20	33.26	74.46
Applying technology in instruction, management, policy	40.34	38.41	78.75
Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum	39.27	43.78	83.05
Motivating and improving staff morale	39.06	37.98	77.04
Enhancing school climate	38.84	41.63	80.47
Increasing p & c involvement in meeting noneducational nds	38.84	36.05	74.89
Increasing collaboration	37.34	37.55	74.89
Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices	37.12	42.70	79.82
Evaluating program effectiveness	35.19	43.99	79.18
Develop frameworks and standards in science/math	34.76	37.12	71.88
Establishing/maintaining site-based school improvement	33.91	38.20	72.11
Recruiting and retaining good staff	32.62	30.04	62.66
Develop frameworks and standards in English/language	32.40	38.63	71.03
Pursuing systemic change	31.76	39.27	71.03
Upgrading school facilities	31.33	33.26	64.59
Exploring the impact of changing technology	29.83	44.42	74.25
Developing early childhood interventions for at-risk students	29.83	33.69	63.52
Developing curriculum renewal and planning process	26.39	42.92	69.31
Establishing district level strategic planning processes	23.82	36.05	59.87
Aligning preservice training and professional practice	22.96	42.70	65.66
Develop frameworks and standards in social studies	22.96	39.70	62.66
Develop frameworks and standards in vocational ed	22.75	27.25	50.00
Reforming the content and process of inservice education	22.32	42.06	64.38
Using data in decision making	19.53	46.78	66.31
Enhancing student transition from school to work	19.31	32.19	51.50
Implementing substance abuse prevention strategies	16.52	46.57	63.09
Addressing the needs of limited-English-proficient students	16.31	26.18	42.49
Assuring cultural/ethnic appropriateness of curric & instruct	15.88	32.62	48.50

Emerging Issues (N = 363/1841, return = 20%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Broad Agreement
Integration of Education and Human Services	45.45	35.26	80.71
Systemic Change	39.67	37.47	77.14
Site-Based Decision Making	33.61	35.26	68.87
Student Assessment	31.96	38.84	70.80
Early Childhood Education	31.96	35.26	67.22
Deregulation	30.85	31.96	62.81
Science and Math	28.93	44.35	73.28
Financing Schools	28.37	38.57	66.94
Current State of Education	26.45	44.35	70.80
Teachers as Professionals	22.31	35.81	58.12
Business Involvement	16.25	37.19	53.44
Educational Choice	11.85	31.13	42.98

Regional Needs Assessment Results for Superintendents

Current Issues (N = 152/451; 38%)	Major Effect	Some Effect	Broad Effect
Assuring adequate funding for education	68.42	19.08	87.50
Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction	52.63	31.58	84.21
Assuring equitable school funding	47.37	24.34	71.71
Increasing p&c involvement in defining/achieving outcomes	46.71	37.50	84.21
Applying technology in instruction, management, policy	46.05	44.08	90.13
Developing student performance assessment methods	42.76	35.53	78.29
Reorganizing/restructuring schooling	42.76	35.53	78.29
Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum	41.45	44.08	85.53
Increasing collaboration	38.82	34.21	73.03
Upgrading school facilities	38.82	25.00	63.82
Evaluating program effectiveness	36.84	48.03	84.87
Enhancing school climate	36.84	47.37	84.21
Develop frameworks and standards in science/math	36.18	38.16	74.34
Increasing p&c involvement in meeting noneducational nds	35.53	36.18	71.71
Recruiting and retaining good staff	35.53	29.61	65.14
Motivating and improving staff morale	34.87	42.76	77.63
Exploring the impact of changing technology	34.21	45.39	79.60
Using strategies to enhance behavior, motivation, self-esteem	33.55	46.71	80.26
Develop frameworks and standards in English/language	33.55	40.13	73.68
Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices	31.58	44.74	76.32
Developing curriculum renewal and planning process	31.58	40.79	72.37
Pursuing systemic change	30.26	46.05	76.31
Meeting the needs of diverse student populations	29.61	36.84	66.45
Develop frameworks and standards in vocational ed	28.95	38.82	67.77
Establishing district level strategic planning processes	28.95	36.18	65.13
Establishing/maintaining site-based school improvement	28.29	36.84	65.13
Enhancing student transition from school to work	26.32	36.84	63.16
Developing early childhood interventions for at-risk students	25.66	39.47	65.13
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Aligning preservice training and professional practice	21.71	47.37	69.08
Reforming the content and process of inservice education	17.76	46.71	64.47
Using data in decision making	17.11	50.66	67.77
Assuring cultural/ethnic appropriateness of curric & instruct	13.82	33.55	47.37
Addressing the needs of limited-English-proficient students	11.18	24.34	35.52
Implementing substance abuse prevention strategies	10.53	48.03	58.56

Emerging Issues (N = 112/450; 25%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Broad Agreement
Integration of Education and Human Services	45.54	39.29	84.83
Systemic Change	41.07	36.61	77.68
Financing Schools	39.29	41.07	80.36
Deregulation	34.82	42.86	77.68
Student Assessment	33.04	42.86	75.90
Early Childhood Education	30.36	49.11	79.47
Site-Based Decision Making	30.36	40.18	70.54
Current State of Education	23.21	54.46	77.67
Teachers as Professionals	20.54	41.07	61.61
Science and Math	18.75	58.04	76.79
Business Involvement	16.96	41.07	58.03
Educational Choice	16.07	33.04	49.11

Regional Needs Assessment Results for Principals

Current Issues (N = 134/459; 29%)	Major Effect	Some Effect	Broad Effect
Using strategies to enhance behavior, motivation, self-esteem	52.99	36.57	89.56
Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction	52.99	30.60	83.59
Assuring adequate funding for education	52.24	23.13	75.37
Meeting the needs of diverse student populations	47.76	29.10	76.86
Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum	47.01	38.06	85.07
Developing student performance assessment methods	47.01	32.84	79.85
Increasing p&c involvement in defining/achieving outcomes	46.27	34.33	80.60
Reorganizing/restructuring schooling	43.28	33.58	76.86
Applying technology in instruction, management, policy	42.54	31.34	73.88
Enhancing school climate	41.79	38.06	79.85
Motivating and improving staff morale	41.04	37.31	78.35
Increasing p&c involvement in meeting noneducational nds	39.55	43.28	82.83
Develop frameworks and standards in English/language	39.55	37.31	76.86
Evaluating program effectiveness	38.06	42.54	80.60
Establishing/maintaining site-based school improvement	38.06	40.30	78.36
Develop frameworks and standards in science/math	38.06	39.55	77.61
Assuring equitable school funding	37.31	26.87	64.18
Pursuing systemic change	36.57	39.55	76.12
Recruiting and retaining good staff	36.57	29.85	66.42
Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices	35.82	48.51	84.33
Increasing collaboration	35.07	43.28	78.35
Exploring the impact of changing technology	30.60	43.28	73.88
Developing curriculum renewal and planning process	28.36	44.03	72.39
Develop frameworks and standards in social studies	28.36	38.06	66.42
Developing early childhood interventions for at-risk students	28.36	35.82	64.18
Upgrading school facilities	27.61	38.81	66.42
Reforming the content and process of inservice education	24.63	41.04	65.67
Develop frameworks and standards in vocational ed	23.88	23.88	47.76
Aligning preservice training and professional practice	22.39	41.79	64.18
Establishing district level strategic planning processes	22.39	37.31	59.70
Using data in decision making	21.64	48.51	70.15
Addressing the needs of limited-English-proficient students	17.91	24.63	42.54
Assuring cultural/ethnic appropriateness of curric & instruct	17.16	32.09	49.25
Implementing substance abuse prevention strategies	16.42	51.49	67.91
Enhancing student transition from school to work	13.43	23.88	37.31

Emerging Issues (N = 83/457; 18%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Broad Agreement
Integration of Education and Human Services	53.01	32.53	85.54
Site-Based Decision Making	45.78	32.53	78.31
Systemic Change	44.58	37.35	81.93
Student Assessment	40.96	32.53	73.49
Early Childhood Education	38.55	34.94	73.49
Science and Math	33.73	37.35	71.08
Current State of Education	30.12	45.78	75.90
Deregulation	28.92	27.71	56.63
Financing Schools	26.51	43.37	69.88
Teachers as Professionals	25.30	36.14	61.44
Business Involvement	18.07	39.76	57.83
Educational Choice	10.84	42.17	53.01

Regional Needs Assessment Results for Teachers

Current Issues (N = 180/935; 19%)	Major Effect	Some Effect	Broad Effect
Assuring adequate funding for education	61.67	22.22	83.89
Using strategies to enhance behavior, motivation, self-esteem	52.78	35.56	88.34
Assuring equitable school funding	48.33	19.44	67.77
Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction	46.67	35.00	81.67
Meeting the needs of diverse student populations	46.11	33.33	79.44
Using developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices	42.78	36.67	79.45
Reorganizing/restructuring schooling	41.11	36.67	77.78
Motivating and improving staff morale	41.11	34.44	75.55
Increasing p&c involvement in meeting noneducational nds	41.11	30.56	71.67
Increasing p&c involvement in defining/achieving outcomes	40.56	39.44	80.00
Developing student performance assessment methods	40.00	41.67	81.67
Enhancing school climate	38.33	39.44	77.77
Increasing collaboration	37.78	36.11	73.89
Establishing/maintaining site-based school improvement	35.56	37.78	73.34
Developing early childhood interventions for at-risk students	34.44	27.22	61.66
Applying technology in instruction, management, policy	33.89	38.89	72.78
Redefining the content, scope, and structure of curriculum	31.67	47.78	79.45
Evaluating program effectiveness	31.67	41.67	73.34
Develop frameworks and standards in science/math	31.11	34.44	65.55
Pursuing systemic change	29.44	33.33	62.77
Upgrading school facilities	27.78	36.11	63.89
Recruiting and retaining good staff	27.22	30.56	57.78
Develop frameworks and standards in English/language	26.11	38.33	64.44
Exploring the impact of changing technology	25.56	44.44	70.00
Aligning preservice training and professional practice	24.44	39.44	63.88
Reforming the content and process of inservice education	24.44	38.89	63.33
Implementing substance abuse prevention strategies	21.67	41.67	63.34
Developing curriculum renewal and planning process	20.56	43.89	64.45
Establishing district level strategic planning processes	20.56	35.00	55.56
Using data in decision making	20.00	42.22	62.22
Develop frameworks and standards in social studies	19.44	34.44	53.88
Addressing the needs of limited-English-proficient students	19.44	28.89	48.33
Enhancing student transition from school to work	17.78	34.44	52.22
Assuring cultural/ethnic appropriateness of curric & instruct	16.67	32.22	48.89
Develop frameworks and standards in vocational ed	16.67	20.00	36.67

Emerging Issues (N = 168/934; 18%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Broad Agreement
Integration of Education and Human Services	41.67	33.93	75.60
Systemic Change	36.31	38.10	74.41
Science and Math	33.33	38.69	72.02
Site-Based Decision Making	29.76	33.33	63.09
Early Childhood Education	29.76	26.19	55.95
Deregulation	29.17	26.79	55.96
Student Assessment	26.79	39.29	66.08
Current State of Education	26.79	36.90	63.69
Financing Schools	22.02	34.52	56.54
Teachers as Professionals	22.02	32.14	54.16
Business Involvement	14.88	33.33	48.21
Educational Choice	9.52	24.40	33.92